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ABSTRACT

A review of Indigenous education was undertaken in the Northern Territory, Australia, to determine the educational views of Indigenous communities, key issues affecting educational outcomes for Indigenous children, and supportable actions to improve those outcomes. Data collection included 126 targeted interviews, 40 public meetings, 106 formal submissions, document and literature review, and case studies of 44 schools with significant Indigenous enrollment. The review documented a widespread desire among Indigenous people for improvements in their children's education, unequivocal evidence of deteriorating outcomes from an already unacceptably low base, and substantial evidence of long-term system failure to address this situation. Deteriorating outcomes included declining attendance despite increasing enrollments, poor retention rates in secondary school, and declining literacy and numeracy skills among young people. Sections of this report cover background on previous reports and the sociocultural context; academic achievement and student evaluation procedures; school reporting systems; information technology and telecommunications; funding and costs; school facilities and infrastructure; staffing (administrator and teacher recruitment and retention, teacher education, Indigenous teachers and staff); access to and provision of early childhood, primary, secondary, postsecondary, and adult education; bilingual education and literacy acquisition; attendance, mobility, and health issues; data deficiencies; and community partnerships (school councils and Indigenous decision making). More than 150 recommendations are offered. Appendices include lists of reports and submissions used, the research methodology, the school questionnaire, Indigenous education expenditures, and a list of bilingual programs and Indigenous Australian languages used. (Contains 61 references and 33 data tables and figures.) (SV)

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Learning lessons

An independent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory

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Northern Territory Department of Education
Darwin 1999

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Preface

The Hon Bob Collins, assisted by a small team of government officers, has undertaken a comprehensive independent review of the delivery of education to Indigenous students in the Northern Territory.

In the relatively short time involved, the review carried out the most exhaustive consultation with Northern Territory schools ever conducted. The review visited 25% of all schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students. A minimum of a full day was spent in each school. Several days were spent in some schools with follow-up visits to others.

The review received 106 formal submissions, held public hearings in Darwin, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, visited forty-four schools, conducted 126 interviews and attended forty forums with a wide range of interested individuals and organisations.

Despite the intrusive and time-consuming nature of the visits, the review wishes to express its gratitude to the students, parents, principals, and all staff for their full cooperation, openness, and assistance. We would also like to extend our thanks to the many individuals within the Northern Territory Department of Education and other agencies who assisted with information and advice, often at very short notice.

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Glossary

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEDAC	Aboriginal Economic Development Advisory Council
AEP	Aboriginal education policy
AHC	annual hours curriculum
AIEW	Aboriginal and Islander education worker
AISNT	Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory
AITAP	Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program
ALOS	average length of stay
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
APSI	action plans for school improvement
ARDS	Aboriginal Resource and Development Services
ARO	Aboriginal resource officer
ASSPA	Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness
ASTF	Aboriginal Student Traineeship Foundation
AT	assistant teacher
ATAS	Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
BAMS	Building Asset Maintenance Schedule
BIITE	Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
CBASS	Computer Based Administration System for Schools
CCIS	Community Care Information System
CEC	community education centre
CEO	chief executive officer
CLO	community liaison officer
DCIS	Department of Corporate and Information Services
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
EDP	Executive Development Program
EDWA	Education Department of Western Australia
EFL	English as a foriegn language
ELO	education liaison officer
ENT	ear, nose and throat
ERT	emergency relief teacher
ESL	English as a second language
ESL ILSS	English as a Second Language for Indigenous-Language-Speaking Students
GSAF	Griffith Service Access Frame

HLO	home liaison officers
HR	human resource
IAD	Institute for Aboriginal Development
IECNT	Indigenous Education Council Northern Territory
IECNT	Indigenous Education Council of the Northern Territory
IESIP	Indigenous Education Strategies Initiatives Program
JSSC	Junior Secondary Studies Certificate
IT & T	information technology and telecommunications
LPC	literature production centres
MAP	Multilevel Assessment Program
MSHR	Menzies School of Health Research
NT	Northern Territory
NTBOS	Northern Territory Board of Studies
NTDE	Northern Territory Department of Education
NTETA	Northern Territory Education and Training Authority
NTOEC	Northern Territory Open Education Centre
NTG	Northern Territory Goverment
NTLIS	Northern Territory Library and Information Service
NTPS	Northern Territory Public Service
NTU	Northern Territory University
OAD	Office of Aboriginal Development
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PSMC	Public Sector Management Course
RTO	registered training organisation
RTS	remote teaching service
SAE	Standard Australian English
SRP	Strategic Results Project
TAFE	technical and further education
TESOL	teaching English to speakers of other languages
THS	Territory Health Services
VEGAS	Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginal Schemes

Executive summary

Terms of reference

The review was commissioned to establish

- the views and educational aspirations of Indigenous parents and community members in relation to their children's schooling, with particular reference to English literacy and numeracy
- the key issues affecting educational outcomes for Indigenous children
- supportable actions for educational outcome improvements.

Key issues

The single greatest challenge for the Northern Territory Department of Education is to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students in partnership with Indigenous people and other agencies and jurisdictions.

The review established that there is

- a widespread desire amongst Indigenous people for improvements in the education of their children
- unequivocal evidence of deteriorating outcomes from an already unacceptably low base, linked to a range of issues, led primarily by poor attendance which has become an educational crisis
- substantial evidence of long-term systemic failure to address this situation
- a number of complex long-standing issues that must be addressed which have significant resource implications for the Department of Education and the Northern Territory Government
- evidence of failure to access significant available Commonwealth funds to address poor outcomes with intensive projects
- a need for the Indigenous Education Council Northern Territory to be completely restructured
- a need for management systems in the Department of Education to be organised to ensure that Indigenous education is a critical core business of the department
- a strong imperative for an outcomes-based approach to Indigenous education at all levels
- Northern Territory Government responsibility for turning around the poor educational outcomes jointly shared by many departments, in particular Territory Health Services, Territory Housing, Local Government, PAWA and the Office of Aboriginal Development, making a whole-of-government response all the more essential
- a need to establish partnerships between Indigenous parents, communities, and peak bodies, the service providers and both the NT and Commonwealth Governments, to honestly acknowledge the gravity and causes of declining outcomes, its destructiveness to future Indigenous aspirations, and to assume the joint responsibility of immediately reversing the downward trend.

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Educational outcomes

The review has found substantive evidence that Indigenous educational outcomes are deteriorating from an already low base, as follows

- an overall decline in attendance at the same time that enrolments have been increasing
- actual attendance in terms of days per week being worse than system averages would show
- actual enrolments omitting more compulsory school-age children than system participation rates would show
- poor retention rates beyond Years 7 and 10
- advice from employer bodies that, more than ever before, they are unable to find people who meet basic literacy and numeracy entry criteria for employment and training
- a repeatedly stated observation from Indigenous elders that their children and grandchildren have lesser literacy and numeracy skills than they do.

Table 1: Percentage of NT students achieving national reading benchmarks in 1998.

NT Student group	Year 3	Year 5
Non-Indigenous students, urban schools	82%	78%
All students, urban schools	78%	71%
Indigenous students, urban schools	54%	36%
Indigenous students, non-urban schools	6%	4%

These statistics can be compared to 68% of students achieving Year 3 reading benchmarks and 62% of students achieving Year 5 reading benchmarks for combined NT schools across all sectors.

Research methods

Research methods included

- interviews, meetings and focus group sessions with internal and external stakeholders
- call for submissions—open to all schools, communities, associations, agencies, industries, parents, students and interested individuals
- literature review and document analysis
- preliminary program audit and mapping of funding sources
- school case studies encompassing interview and debate with school administrators, teachers and support staff; open forum community meetings; observation of and discussion with students; assessment of school and system data on attendance, staffing profiles, and academic achievement.

Out of this process, 106 formal submissions and three videos were received, 126 interviews were conducted, forty forums and meetings attended, and case studies of forty-four schools were collated.

Recommendations

Review process

It is recommended that

1 in order to be inclusive of all Indigenous Australians, the Aboriginal Education Branch be renamed the Indigenous Education Branch, consistent with the new peak body, the Indigenous Education Council of the Northern Territory.

2 the term 'Indigenous' should be used in all instances to inclusively reflect both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Student assessment

System testing

It is recommended that

3 the Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP) tests be retained.

4 effort is made to provide professional development programs to teachers to support their understanding of the different purposes of testing and assessment.

Feedback

It is recommended that

5 NTDE develops means of making feedback of the results of MAP data meaningful and accessible to Indigenous parents, in line with their clearly stated interest in comparative information.

6 an information strategy is implemented to ensure the national benchmarking process is clearly explained to parents and school-based staff.

7 work is commenced immediately on the school council reports of MAP results to

- replace the dense introductory text with understandable information
- ensure that the results stand out clearly and are meaningfully represented
- provide clear explanations of what the profile levels are meant to mean.

8 the revised MAP reporting format for school councils is tested with Indigenous people in remote areas for clarity and accessibility.

9 schools explore alternative models of communicating student progress to parents, noting the good practice examples that already exist in schools.

English as a second language (ESL)

It is recommended that

10 NTDE issues a clear statement establishing

- the reasonable expectations for a student being tested in a language in which the student has limited proficiency
- when ESL students should be expected to be ready to undertake the same assessments as first-language English speakers
- whether it is possible to establish common benchmarks for ESL and first-language English speakers and test for these.

Profiling

It is recommended that

11 ESL profiles are mandated for use by teachers as a means of both mapping and ensuring the progress of identified ESL students.

12 NTDE urgently evaluates the mandating of mathematics and English profiles for remote area Indigenous students in the light of the Curriculum Review Recommendation 38 and provides clear direction for schools on their use.

Secondary assessment

It is recommended that

13 secondary schools ensure that parents are given accessible, meaningful and relevant information on the educational progress of their children and the course options available.

School and system reporting

School annual reports

It is recommended that

14 school annual reports be the key mechanism for the school's accountability within the system.

15 school annual reports have a relentless focus on student outcomes.

16 NTDE ensures these annual reports are responded to by senior management with critical analysis, both positive and negative, of the school's performance.

System reporting

It is recommended that

17 NTDE ensures there is an unequivocal outcomes-based approach applied across the whole of Indigenous education supported by objective assessment using agreed system-wide benchmarks.

18 schools and principals increase their efforts to use the data to explain to parents and children consequences of educational decisions made on their behalf.

Information technology & telecommunications

It is recommended that

19 NTDE harnesses the advancing wave of communications capacity coming with the new communications systems and services to network all schools including major remote sites.

20 NTDE integrates the implementation and support of remote communications and desktop service provision to schools with other Northern Territory Government (NTG) agencies, e.g. Territory Health Services (THS), Police, Department of Corporate and Information Services (DCIS) and local councils and the community.

21 NTDE implements a comprehensive student tracking system allowing Indigenous students to be traced through the system and ensure their achievements are recorded.

22 NTDE investigates the opportunities to share the client tracking systems developed by THS for its community health systems and the Education Department of Western Australia.

23 NTDE ensures that any new resource management systems satisfy the basic outcome data requirements to track outcomes for Indigenous students and be scaled to allow remote schools with minimal technical and administrative support to be full players.

24 NTDE works closely with Northern Territory University (NTU), Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) and other training organisations to ensure that all teachers have a minimum level of computer literacy and related teaching competencies.

25 NTDE institutes and resources dedicated cross-program project teams to share resources with other NTG agencies and harness Federal Government funding in partnership with Indigenous management to improve access to information technology & telecommunication (IT & T) systems in remote areas.

Commonwealth–Territory roles and relationships

Commonwealth IESIP program

It is recommended that

26 the NTDE Indigenous Education Strategies Initiatives Program (IESIP) Review team clarify which IESIP funds are being used as substitute funding.

27 future allocations under IESIP or equivalent funding programs are used as top-up to address the huge gap in outcomes after NTDE funds have been distributed fairly on **a per capita basis and weighted for needs**.

28 the current system of thirty-two managers for IESIP programs be immediately discontinued and replaced with coordination of the NTDE IESIP program being the responsibility of the Aboriginal Education Branch.

29 IESIP initiatives clearly demonstrate their contribution to the enhancement of educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

30 the revised IESIP programs have a clear focus on attendance, English oracy, literacy and numeracy.

On-costs for IESIP

It is recommended that

31 as a matter of urgency, a submission to Treasury is made to reduce the on-cost component of employing people under the IESIP.

32 the savings are directed into targeted programs for Indigenous education in schools.

33 NTDE and Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) renegotiate the strategies and reporting requirements for IESIP in line with meeting the key recommendations of this review.

Abstudy

It is recommended that

34 NTDE work with DETYA and Centrelink to clarify the nature of the Abstudy Program.

Funding and costs

Tracking costs

It is recommended that

35 NTDE institutes financial management systems and processes to allow accurate measurement of the resource inputs and requirements at a region, school, subject, program and ultimately student level.

36 branch directors, principals and all senior managers are trained to be competent in comprehending, analysing and acting upon such financial management and resource information.

37 NTDE senior management review regular management reports on staff turnover, relief provision, and other areas of resource loss and require all managers as part of their performance appraisal to commit to percentage improvements in these areas.

38 NTDE ensures that the management reporting systems that are put in place are pragmatic and driven by a benefits orientation and meet the business and information needs of managers within schools.

Measuring disadvantage

It is recommended that

39 NTDE seeks agreement from the Commonwealth to allocate funding on the basis of need, not category.

40 NTDE, as part of a whole-of-government effort, uses a measure such as the Griffith Service Access Frame (GSAF) in all negotiations with the Commonwealth.

Repairs and maintenance

It is recommended that

41 the processes for repairs and maintenance are streamlined, with more discretion given to the principals to have items fixed on the spot.

42 comprehensive effort is made to bring all schools to an acceptable standard with the subsequent repairs and maintenance allocation to schools calculated as a percentage of the total asset value, ensuring that this does not disadvantage poorly equipped schools.

43 the Building Assets Maintenance Schedule (BAMS) priorities for repairs and maintenance are developed in consultation with principals, are related to action plans for school improvement and closely followed by comprehensive action.

44 in recognition that principals are not usually skilled maintenance supervisors and a centralised approach to small-scale remote locality issues is unworkable, that community-based agencies are considered as the preferred maintenance providers **where quality and cost-effectiveness can be assured** . An additional benefit of this approach is enhancement of community self-management and increased capacity to offer ongoing employment opportunities at the local level.

Parity in infrastructure

It is recommended that

45 NTDE develops a strategic plan for infrastructure incorporating the key goals of this review. This would encompass

- school plans and community commitments to increasing attendance
- anticipating the planning recommended (under 'Access and provision') for secondary provisions and multipurpose early childhood centres
- a rolling program to ensure that over the next five years, all school facilities will be brought to an agreed standard
- disability and health needs being integrated within the designs
- that new facilities in their design encompass the goals of having education as a lifetime resource for all age groups, and are places that are welcoming to all community members.

Housing and future needs

Housing – general

It is recommended that

46 existing areas of chronic teacher housing shortfall are redressed as a matter of urgency.

47 remote area housing is brought to an accepted level of amenity.

Housing for local recruits

It is recommended that

48 Cabinet Decision 2454 is amended to allow the staggered introduction of teacher housing in remote areas for local recruits who have full teaching qualifications.

49 pursuant to the Northern Territory Government 's interest in Indigenous professional development and greater community level responsibility for service delivery, Cabinet Decision 2454 is considered to apply to local recruits from other agencies, especially Northern Territory Police and Territory Health Services, where those recruits have appropriate qualifications. That is, consideration should be given to supplying government housing to qualified local Indigenous police officers, nurses and doctors under negotiated arrangements with the appropriate community agencies.

50 the Government concern that such a strategy will increase the expectations of other local public sector employees in remote communities is addressed with a public information strategy which clearly explains the rationale and eligibility criteria.

51 in view of the high costs involved, negotiation with the Commonwealth is essential.

Recruitment and retention

Principals

It is recommended that

52 a comprehensive professional development program for principals is developed, and implemented, providing business management and public sector leadership training and addressing the separate needs of Indigenous principals and senior school staff.

53 in conjunction with the Self-Managing Schools Program, principals be given control of notional staffing budgets by devolving funding to school councils to allow greater recruitment flexibility and community control.

54 principal positions are advertised nationally to attract the widest field possible.

55 a program is embarked on by NTDE to articulate to school principals the strategy of moving Indigenous education to core business and to ensure this shift is actioned within schools.

56 NTDE develops performance agreements with principals which build these departmental expectations into contractual arrangements, including minimally, requirements to improve Indigenous student attendance, learning outcomes and relationships with the community.

57 the titles 'Head Teacher' and 'Teacher in Charge' be changed to 'Principal'.

Indigenous education staffing strategy

It is recommended that

58 NTDE notes the successes within the Education Department of Western Australia and Territory Health Services in significantly reducing staff turnover, and learns from these and other such initiatives to establish a comprehensive recruitment and employment strategy which enables rigorous recruitment tied to performance outcomes.

59 in the first instance the NTDE engages professional recruitment consultants to establish the recruitment criteria and processes required, and to assist with the design and development of the overall strategy.

60 care is taken to avoid creating new categories of high staff turnover schools in regional areas not within defined categories of remoteness in determinations of hard-to-staff schools developed under the total recruitment strategy.

Preparation and training

Tertiary preparation

It is recommended that

61 NTDE exercises its power as a purchaser of services from tertiary institutions to specify the skills set required by the department for its schools and negotiate service-level agreements with Northern Territory University (NTU), the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) or other providers to meet the professional development and training needs of its staff.

62 NTDE negotiates with the tertiary sector to increase the scope and adequacy of ESL training at the undergraduate level.

Orientation and cross-cultural effectiveness training

It is recommended that

63 NTDE orientation and cross-cultural training programs be reviewed urgently with a view to increasing the local area content and applicability of the information acquired, and to take account of relevant cross-departmental work and interstate initiatives.

64 schools/clusters are allocated discretionary funds enabling employment of suitable local people to provide cross-cultural community induction.

65 the option of outsourcing urban area cross-cultural training is investigated and that suitable training providers with an established track record be engaged to fulfil the mandated Northern Territory Public Service (NTPS) requirements to provide effective cross-cultural preparation.

Ongoing professional renewal

It is recommended that

66 NTDE implements a strategic plan for staff development related to the requirements for improving Indigenous education across the board.

67 NTDE develops and implements a strategy to achieve universal coverage in ESL methodologies for all teachers across all schooling types— early childhood through to secondary—within a period of five years.

68 in the initial period, the department should precisely specify its particular ESL training requirements and establish a clear plan analysing the workforce and the current levels of training, specifying the different groups that need different levels of input, and determining how and when the gaps will be filled against performance targets.

69 NTDE develops options for providing intensive short course training in ESL.

Indigenous recruits

Indigenous teachers and other Indigenous staff

It is recommended that

70 NTDE develops and implements a strategy to vigorously pursue an increase in the number of Indigenous teachers and Indigenous people involved with schools in an official and paid capacity as the best long-term solution for addressing high teacher turnover and to support a major recommendation of this review to achieve the active involvement of Indigenous people in the control and delivery of their own education services.

71 NTDE increases the proportion of Indigenous staff in senior non-school-based administrative positions.

Assistant teachers

It is recommended that

72 the para-professional role of the assistant teacher is explicitly recognised and supported with appropriate training.

73 staffing formulas are revised to ensure that all remote area teachers share the same entitlements to assistant teachers; and to ensure an assistant teacher presence in secondary classes.

AIEWs and AROs

It is recommended that

74 the IESIP review fully evaluate the current allocation, mix and location of AIEW/ARO positions and that increased IESIP resources be directed toward this program in 2000 and for the quadrennium 2001–2004—the IESIP review should have regard to the need to maintain the flexibility between permanent and part-time positions.

75 in the light of the high value placed on the educational return for students of the work of these staff and their continuing professional development, that the NTDE move to progressively incorporate these positions into the core business funding of the department.

Professional development of Indigenous staff

It is recommended that

76 NTDE develops and implements an intense and structured effort to support the skilling of Indigenous staff especially in the area of teaching English as a second or foreign language.

77 the mentoring program is continued and expanded.

78 NTDE negotiates with NTETA to provide a greater level of funding for AIEW professional development.

79 the department enters into agreements with training providers such as the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) and provide the release time and support for their staff seeking to gain initial qualifications, to undertake inservice training, or to upgrade their qualifications.

Early childhood

It is recommended that

80 there be an increase in the exposure of all Indigenous children to early literacy and numeracy learning in vernacular where appropriate and Standard Australian English oracy.

81 NTDE investigates joint funding arrangements with Territory Health Services, DETYA and the Federal Department of Family and Children's Services to develop play centres and distribute reading and pre-literacy material and educational play equipment to all sites that are accessible to parents and children, for example, health clinics and women's centres. This would build on the THS-NTDE Framework Agreement on the Provision of Early Childhood and Outside School Hours Care Services for Young Territory Children (NTDE/THS 1999).

82 mobile preschools and playgroups are considered as interim solutions to ensure guaranteed access for all children to structured early childhood education.

83 sufficient funding is sought to enhance the key role libraries play in the development of literacy outcomes for Indigenous students and opportunities for coordinated service development and a coordinated approach to funding are explored.

84 within a period of five years, there be guaranteed access to play centres and preschools for all children in the three to five year age group.

85 new facilities for infants and toddlers should be designed with the aim of establishing multipurpose early childhood centres that offer infant health and other early childhood services. Such centres would not need to be administered by the school but could be run by other suitable organisations.

86 the multipurpose early childhood centres incorporate childcare facilities for Indigenous school staff and young mothers who are still students.

Secondary schooling

It is recommended that

87 NTDE explores means of expanding the number of secondary courses that are available in remote areas and staffing them appropriately.

88 within six months, the NTDE develops policy recommendations on secondary programs which provide for

- options for providing secondary programs to all Indigenous secondary-age students, with secondary trained teachers supported by ESL specialists
- conversion of community education centres to area school secondary providers, i.e. able to implement board approved special category and mainstream secondary curriculum, which are staffed accordingly
- the assessment of large rural schools that fall outside of the CEC category for their potential conversion to area school status
- a reassessment of remote area secondary school staff formula determinations
- expansion of the hostel arrangements currently operating successfully in Tennant Creek and Katherine
- an exploration of the options for providing high-quality state-of-the art IT&T support for distance learning
- an identification of overall resource requirements.

89 within twelve months NTDE has a clear policy on increasing secondary options to the end of the compulsory years for all Indigenous students, urban and remote.

Post-compulsory schooling

Vocational education and training

It is recommended that

90 the vocational education and training funding and resource agreements between NTETA and registered training organisations be comprehensively reviewed.

91 as a transitional measure, NTETA should move to significantly expand the funds available to the Flexible Response Funding program from within its existing global budgets.

92 in consulting with a community on its training requirements, that NTETA directly involves the school principal and the educational board if that has been established in that region/community.

Adult education

It is recommended that

93 there is a permanently based adult education provider presence at community level where appropriate. In this regard, the initiatives being taken by the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education should be supported.

AITAP

It is recommended that

94 AITAP is supported but a continuing effort made to encourage the greater involvement in the program by remote students, including those attending urban residential colleges and high schools.

Students with special needs

It is recommended that

95 the impending Student Services Review examines the provision of student services and special education to Indigenous students in the Northern Territory, as a specific term of reference.

96 the impending Student Services Review considers equity of service provision for students with special needs.

97 the impending Student Services Review makes recommendations on the facilities required and costs involved to ensure all schools are catering for hearing impairment and levels of physical disability in Indigenous students as design requirements.

Two-way learning

It is recommended that

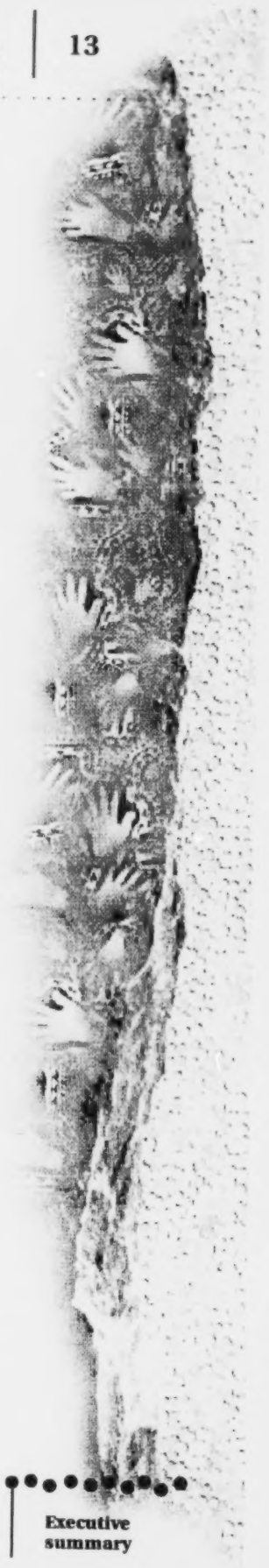
98 NTDE supports 'two-way learning' programs in schools where the local community wants such a program, and assessment demonstrating the essential elements for its effective delivery are in place.

99 the initial assessment, and any ongoing assessment, must be dispassionate, rigorous and unequivocally focused on agreed outcomes.

100 NTDE issues a formal policy document which clearly states the NTDE policy of support for 'two-way learning', affirming the value of Indigenous language and culture and highlighting the importance of learning of Standard Australian English oracy and literacy as a crucial element of the schooling process.

101 the teaching framework adopted to support 'two-way learning' needs to be flexible enough to incorporate in a soundly based educational program the individual situations and requirements of different communities.

102 NTDE urgently commissions high-level research into the use of vernacular in Indigenous schools to develop the most appropriate pedagogy to support effective learning in this environment. A comprehensive analysis as part of this research must establish what is required to ensure effective exposure to Standard Australian English oracy and literacy takes place, while supporting vernacular language development. The research undertaken must be focused on improving outcomes.



Second language learning

It is recommended that

103 NTDE explores all possible avenues of increasing the exposure of Indigenous students to spoken Standard Australian English.

104 as an immediate measure, NTDE with DETYA progressively extend the ESL ILSS program across all primary years.

105 urgent priority is given to develop strategies to improve the unacceptably low attendance of enrolled ESL ILSS students.

Language teaching

It is recommended that

106 Indigenous viewpoints, perceptions and expectations about social, cultural and historical matters are reflected in the curricula, teaching and administration of all NT schools.

107 NTDE examines options for producing high-quality curriculum material, which would add to the understanding by students everywhere of the value of our unique Indigenous cultures and languages and their interaction with Western culture.

108 options for extending the IAD Languages in Schools Program are explored.

Literacy and numeracy

Explicit pedagogy

It is recommended that

109 NTDE develops a strategy for all schools, in the face of high turnover, and uniquely challenging teaching conditions, which detail how language acquisition programs are delivered in the school.

Literacy and numeracy support materials

It is recommended that

110 NTDE ensures quality materials are available and information on guided reading schemes is available within all schools. This includes the potential of electronic media.

111 particular focus is placed on appropriate material relevant to secondary-age Indigenous students.

112 NTDE explores options for making this material available to parents and not just restricted to teachers and schools.

Strategic Support Unit

It is recommended that

113 a Strategic Support Unit be established to provide critical management advice on student services.

Libraries

It is recommended that

114 a Service Level Agreement between NTDE and the Northern Territory Library and Information Service is established to clarify expectations regarding services to be provided to remote school libraries—as well as urban school libraries. Key issues to be considered include the level and nature of services, funding for resources and the appropriate use of joint use facilities.

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Literature Production Centres

It is recommended that

115 NTDE rationalises literature production centres and explore opportunities to retain text production, graphics and illustration in communities and have publication tasks completed elsewhere.

116 literature production centres shift their focus to take advantage of contemporary technologies.

Attendance

It is recommended that

117 a comprehensive attendance strategy is developed as a matter of urgent priority, building on the range of useful practices already being implemented in individual schools.

118 a developed comprehensive attendance strategy be a critical element of the partnership agreements under Self-Managing Schools Program (see Conclusion).

Mobility

It is recommended that

119 NTDE recognises that there are communities of affiliation between which students and families will move in a patterned way and organise its administration to better align with these affiliated communities.

120 NTDE draws on other agency data and liaises with the various land councils and other relevant organisations, e.g. the community controlled health sector and outstation resource centres to better map and anticipate population movements.

121 NTDE implements student tracking systems that allow teachers to more freely exchange student information between such communities of affiliation, to improve the education continuity for the student.

122 NTDE organises school clusters to correspond with patterns of visiting and residence.

123 NTDE ensures that affiliated schools work collaboratively to share information, jointly plan program delivery, coordinate school services and professional development support, and are consulted as a regional grouping for administrative and policy considerations.

Health issues and wider social context

General

It is recommended that

124 infant health interventions are introduced within the multipurpose early childhood centres recommended by this review.

125 health objectives are incorporated within school action plans and principal performance management agreements, to ensure the links are maintained in practice as well as theory.

126 community service agreements are established between the school and the community health centre.

127 teachers are trained and supported for their health and community development role.

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Hearing

It is recommended that

128 all teachers receive training and support in appropriate teaching practices for students with hearing impairments.

129 benchmark standards for classroom acoustics for students with hearing disabilities and for all Indigenous ESL students are established in collaboration with Territory Health Services, the Australian Government Hearing Laboratory and the Menzies School of Heath Research.

130 a systematic plan is developed, resourced and implemented to upgrade classroom acoustics in accordance with these standards to create sound listening and learning environments for Indigenous students.

Data deficiencies

Attendance data

It is recommended that

131 NTDE clarifies and defines what is categorised as attendance and makes this the standard measure across all schools.

132 NTDE commissions work to cost and develop a comprehensive approach to the tracking of all children to enable tracking of multiple target groups supporting the recommendations under 'Mobility.'

133 the data enables disaggregation to target areas most in need.

134 systems be developed to allow daily participation for Indigenous students to be reliably monitored.

135 all data allows separate analysis of Indigenous attendance and outcomes.

136 attendance information be routinely included in educational outcomes reports to allow key variables to be distinguished.

Participation

It is recommended that

137 NTDE adopts alternate enumeration methods to calculate and report real participation rates.

138 NTDE establishes an agreed population estimate for a particular community via negotiations between the school, health centre and other agencies and organisations with a strong community presence, including housing, local government and the local community council.

Staff Turnover

It is recommended that

139 as a matter of urgency, school transfer and appointments data are analysed to give senior management an immediate and contemporary portrait of staff turnover and the cost to the department to benchmark the impact of wider reforms arising out of this review.

140 resources are dedicated to ensure historical information is included in the Teacher Information System as a matter of priority.

141 reduction in teacher turnover is a formal performance indicator and is regularly reported on at senior management level.

Community partnerships

The Indigenous Education Council Northern Territory

It is recommended that

142 the IECNT be completely restructured.

143 in the event of the Government not supporting this major recommendation at this time, the imminent reappointment of the existing council not proceed and a thorough review be conducted on behalf of the Northern Territory Government and Commonwealth Government.

The new Indigenous Education Council of the Northern Territory

It is recommended that

144 the Indigenous Education Council of the Northern Territory be established as a partnership between NTDE, the Northern Territory tertiary sector, ATSIC, and the land councils. All parties must be represented on the council at senior level.

145 the council develops broad policy parameters for Indigenous education across all schools, provides advice to the Minister and DETYA and oversees the budget for the delivery of the Self-Managing Schools Program.

146 an immediate responsibility of the council is to oversee and support the establishment of the pilots of the Self-Managing Schools Program and progressively extend these arrangements across the Northern Territory.

147 the council works closely with Territory Health Services and DETYA. The Council Secretariat must have an ongoing working relationship with these two agencies and when appropriate they should be directly represented at meetings of the council. The council must also work closely with other providers of educational services to Indigenous students.

148 the council be responsible for overseeing the implementation of agreed recommendations of this review.

Self-Managing Schools Program

It is recommended that

149 the pilot Self-Managing Schools Program be established under the auspices of the Indigenous Education Council of the Northern Territory.

150 the program framework be flexible enough to allow community or regionally based arrangements incorporating the individual requirements of the communities concerned.

151 the program takes every opportunity to work in partnership with other community controlled initiatives.

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Introduction

Overview

Improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students across the Northern Territory is the greatest challenge facing the Northern Territory Department of Education (NTDE).

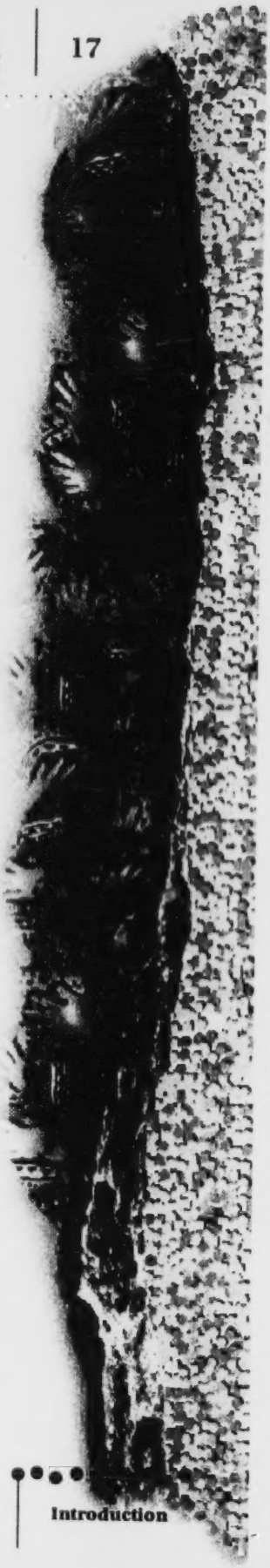
The department asked the review to pay particular attention to the goals of Indigenous parents and community members. The predominant goal articulated to the review was the need for Indigenous children to develop their English language oracy, literacy and numeracy skills while maintaining their own language, cultural heritage and Indigenous identity. The resounding message from our consultations with parents, students, staff, and external stakeholders was that current strategic directions should and can be improved and more importantly, that a radically different approach to implementation has to be put in place. The emphasis must be to support the direct involvement of Indigenous parents and communities in the delivery of educational services to their children. We were heartened to see examples of 'good practice' in schools focused on fostering this involvement and producing positive results.

There is an urgent need to have a system-wide, cross-government partnership approach to improving outcomes. Above all, Indigenous education must become a critical part of the core business of the NTDE and this will require a real cultural change to achieve.

The review is pleased to note that for the first time a discrete branch dedicated to Indigenous education has been established in the department this year with its own Branch Head. However, because the range of issues impacting negatively on educational outcomes is so comprehensive, a whole-of-government approach is required. The effect of continuing and widespread low achievement by students on real Indigenous self-determination is so pervasive, the Government must engage in a formal and cooperative dialogue with Indigenous parents, communities, the land councils, ATSIC and other Indigenous peak bodies, to reverse the trend.

The most recent external inquiry into the provision of remote area education to Aborigines in the Northern Territory was conducted by the Legislative Assembly Public Accounts Committee. The committee conducted its inquiry from December 1994 to May 1996, held hearings in Darwin, Alice Springs and ten remote Indigenous communities, recieved thirteen submissions and made seventy-nine recommendations. The committee' s Report no. 27 was tabled in the Legislative Assembly in August 1996.

The committee accepted evidence, as does this review, that Year 7 level English literacy and numeracy are a necessary minimum for any person to function effectively in the wider Australian society, and a minimum of Year 10 level literacy and numeracy are required for any management role in the community. The committee found that eleven to sixteen-year-old students in remote Indigenous schools were averaging around Year 2–3 levels. The stark reality is that many Indigenous students are leaving the school system with the English literacy and numeracy ability of a six to seven-year-old mainstream child.



With such inadequate skills in literacy and numeracy Indigenous people while able to engage effectively in their own world, are limited in their engagement with the world outside. They are almost unemployable outside their own communities, and even there are largely employed in unskilled jobs and are reliant on others from outside their community for important aspects of their lives. Where, as is often the case, this is the norm across a whole community, aspirations for real 'self-determination' or 'self-empowerment' for many Indigenous people ring very hollow indeed.

The need to assist Indigenous students to speak Standard Australian English more fluently and confidently cannot be overstated. There is a need for oral English instruction right through the early childhood and primary school years. To quote one highly qualified and experienced bush principal, 'If only our children were competent and confident speakers of English by the end of Grade 6, even with little or no literacy skills, then we would have achieved a significant result'.

The review's findings confirm the conclusions of the *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* which stated the following

> We are convinced that there will be no substantial improvement in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students unless there is a concerted effort and a major investment in literacy development by the Commonwealth and the education providers, beginning in pre-school [sic] and continuing through the early childhood years and beyond. (Yunupingu 1994a)

The wider options provided by better skills in literacy and numeracy are simply not available when Indigenous people wish to exercise them. The review noted many instances where Indigenous people wanted to access interesting, full-time, and well-paid jobs provided by willing employers, but were prevented from doing so by low literacy skills. One major employer peak body cited low literacy skills as the first, second, and third barrier inhibiting greater employment of local Indigenous people in their industry. Industry, union, denominational and government agency submissions repeated the theme.

What is particularly frustrating is that many of these jobs are available in or near the home communities of the people wanting them. For example, basic literacy and numeracy is a necessity for employment in the mining industry, which has a preferential employment program and is actively seeking to increase the number of Indigenous mining employees by providing cadetships and workplace tuition in numeracy and literacy. It has found that ' most potential employees from communities could not read occupational health and safety documents, or even signs around the mine-site. They cannot fill in the application forms, write their date of birth or tally numbers as is required for many jobs'. (Joint Mining Industry Submission to review)

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Educational outcomes for Indigenous students are a concern across urban and non-urban categories. Having said this, it should be noted that remote area students are particularly affected by two issues identified by the review as directly impacting upon low educational outcomes—high teacher turnover and poor attendance—and for this reason feature more heavily in this report. Poor attendance at school, for whatever reason, remains the most significant direct cause of poor learning. Observing a functionally illiterate twelve-year-old child receiving tutoring at a school, the review was advised he had been at the school for a total of sixteen days in the previous year. A pattern has developed across the Territory of sporadic or unsatisfactory attendance up to Year 7, at which point many students drop out of the system completely. If they labour on, it is through a desperately under-resourced remote area secondary sector which sees many students struggling through remedial courses designed to 'bridge' them into mainstream courses. Graduates from the bridging courses, or the more capable students from primary, can then take on junior secondary school courses through the hard yards of disembodied distance correspondence—or, if they can get in and their parents can manage it, at a residential college far from home. It is not surprising that the number of remote area students moving through upper secondary is very small indeed. At the same time, the rapidly increasing enrolments witnessed by the Northern Territory Open Education Centre, which offers distance education, stands as testimony to the determination of some young Indigenous students to get through an extraordinarily difficult system in increasing numbers.

In the pages that follow, much detail is provided on what needs to be changed, reflecting our charter to report on what Indigenous people want for their children's education together with supportable actions for improvement. The risk is that in specifying areas for reform or overhaul, we imply that nothing has or is being done well at the moment. This is far from the truth. The fact is that a report focusing on what people aspire to and want changed cannot do equal justice to the many praiseworthy events and dedicated efforts that are taking place across schools in the Northern Territory. We have tried to give some sense of this by highlighting instances of good practice, but even these do not fully convey just how impressive many educators involved in the education of Indigenous students actually are. The fact this report has been commissioned is itself evidence of the NTDE's determination to improve outcomes for Indigenous students and a sign of the newly created environment within which reform can occur. There are things that can be done, gaps that can be filled, and approaches that can be modifed, and these are given prominence in this report.

There is from time to time criticism of unrealistic targets being set in Indigenous education. It is criticism that is often cast in a negative context and used as an excuse for failure. Far better to aim at something and fail than to aim at nothing and succeed. A realistic target for all involved—which can and must be achieved over the next five years—is sustainable system-wide improvements in outcomes for Indigenous students, particularly in Standard Australian English oracy, literacy and numeracy.

The underlying philosophy for Indigenous education in the Northern Territory is to restore, at a community level, the involvement and ownership by Indigenous people of the education for the of their children, and in partnership with the providers, to progressively improve attendance, teaching, and outcomes across all Northern Territory schools.

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Structure of this report

This report begins with descriptions of the background to this review, research processes and key assumptions. This is followed by chapters dealing with system-level issues—Educational outcomes; Costs, Funding and accountability mechanisms; Facilities and infrastructure—before focusing closely on school- and student-level issues —Staffing; Access; Language and literacy acquisition; Attendance and participation; Data deficiencies. It concludes with recommendations on the need to create meaningful partnerships with Indigenous people.

The terms of reference have not been separated out and addressed discretely but rather inform all the key focal areas identified in this report. In each chapter the views of Indigenous people, as reflected through community consultations, submissions and in previous reports, are summarised and represented as faithfully as possible within the text. Key issues affecting outcomes and recommended actions for improvements are stepped out in each section.

Likewise, while a literature review was conducted, there is no separate section specifically titled 'literature review', as our aim has been to produce a document that is academically informed but of immediate interest and use to decision makers within government. Accordingly, references to published and unpublished works are embedded within the text where this is relevant to the arguments, and not otherwise.

Where submissions have been made under the auspices of a particular organisation or institution, these are named in the text. This includes individuals who have written in their capacity as the leader or key representative of an organisation. Individuals who submitted information on their own behalf have not been identified. Similarly, an assurance given to people who contributed to the school case studies that they would not be personally identified in the final report has been honored. While care has been taken to ensure that case study confidences are respected, where the review has chosen to highlight instances of good practice, school identification details have been given in the interests of encouraging wider dissemination.

These selected instances of good practice, made clearly identifiable in the body of the report, are not exhaustive and represent only a sample of what we saw Territory-wide. The good practice examples have in common that they were developed and implemented at the school level, are producing a positive result, are driven by the principal/head teacher/teacher-in-charge,[1] but tend not to be routinely featured across the system.

[1] For ease of reference, school principals, head teachers and teachers-in-charge are collectively referred to as principals in this report.

Review process

Background to the review

In September 1998, as part of a system-wide examination of Northern Territory Government functions known as Planning for Growth, an Education Review Task Group looked at the delivery of services to Northern Territory students. The task group, headed by Mr Wal Czernezkyj, identified seventeen key areas for improvement, including *Consolidation of Aboriginal Program Delivery*. The program for action under this particular improvement area included the establishment of a new Aboriginal Education Branch to bring together previously isolated units, and the development of a five-year plan of action as part of a longer term twenty-year program.

To provide focus for the activity of the Aboriginal Education Branch, and to set key strategic directions for the five-year plan and twenty-year program, the department commissioned an independent review of Indigenous education, by The Hon Bob Collins. In addition the review comprised

Tess Lea	Project Manager
Tina Lambert	Senior Project Officer
Colleen Rosas	Project Officer
Kate Senior	Data Analyst
Shannon Hanley	Administrative Support.

Mr Czernezkyj's instructions were very clear: he wanted an honest and independent assessment of the issues. To this end, information was made available freely by all stakeholders to the review. At no time were members of the team restricted in their investigations.

A departmental working party was established to assist the review with background information, comprising

Peter Jones	former Acting Director, Schools Policy Branch
Zania Liddle	Mentoring Program, Operations South
Jeanie Liddle	Home Liaison Officer, Operations South
Shirley Nirrpurranydji	Principal, Gapuwiyak Community Education Centre
Sue Reaburn	Acting Manager, Aboriginal Education Policy
Colleen Rosas	Indigenous Parent Support Officer
Chris Ross	Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educators Support Unit
Ralph Wiese	Acting Regional Director, Health and Education, Operations South
Don Zoellner	President, NT Principals Association.
Ken Davies	Acting Director, Aboriginal Education Branch, joined the working party following his appointment to the position in May 1999.

The review met with the working party on 22 March 1999 and again on 1 September 1999.

The Aboriginal Education Branch

The significance of the creation of a discrete Aboriginal Education Branch is placed into clearer perspective when contrasted with the situation it replaced. During the period 1979 to 1985 Aboriginal education policy was the responsibility of the Superintendent Aboriginal Education Policy, while Regional Superintendents supervised the day-to-day operation of schools. (Parish 1990: 21)

In 1986 there ceased to be a specific officer responsible for Aboriginal education policy. Two positions of Superintendents of Aboriginal Education were created, one operating from Darwin and responsible for all Aboriginal schools in the immediate Darwin region and the other responsible for all Aboriginal schools in the Alice Springs region. At this time the responsibility for Aboriginal education rested with the Secretary and Deputy Secretaries of the department. This was accomplished in consultation with Feppi, a precursor body to the Indigenous Education Council Northern Territory (IECNT). Further changes occurred until overall responsibility for Aboriginal education policy was mainstreamed into the Schools Policy area at the beginning of the 1990s. (ibid.)

The Schools Policy section took carriage of the Aboriginal education policy (AEP) and began to coordinate AEP-funded programs and activities to meet intended goals as defined in the AEP statement. The focus on system-driven and managed programs meant there was little synergy between centrally driven and funded AEP programs and school-based activity. Certainly, in the initial stages, few of the resources were allocated to schools.

Coordination was lacking and substantial Commonwealth resources were directed into thirty-two diverse programs. During the 1990s the Department of Education bureaucracy became increasingly defensive when questioned about falling outcomes for Aboriginal students by interest groups and other government agencies. The lack of an overarching departmental strategy in relation to Aboriginal education meant that a number of stakeholders, each with competing interests in the department, were participating in consuming resources that could have been directed to schools in a more focused and strategic manner. Despite this, the AEP program had some notable successes during this time. This included the establishment of forty Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker positions, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program (AITAP), and the writing of Special Category Curriculum for secondary-age Aboriginal students—otherwise known as 'bridging courses'.

> In 1996 a report commissioned by the NT Department of Education and written by Professor Paul Hughes recommended the establishment of an Aboriginal Education branch to coordinate strategic policy in Aboriginal education. It took the 1998 'Schools ... Our Focus' review, led by the current Secretary, Mr Wal Czernezkyj, to finally implement this recommendation, and the Aboriginal Education Branch was officially established by the Secretary early in 1999. The new commitment to reform and improvement—as evidenced by the commissioning of this current review—is unmistakable, and augers well for future developments in Indigenous education in the Northern Territory.

In order to be inclusive of all Indigenous Australians, the new Aboriginal Education Branch should be renamed the Indigenous Education Branch, consistent with the new peak body, the Indigenous Education Council of the Northern Territory. The term 'Indigenous' should be used in all instances to inclusively reflect both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Terms of reference

The terms of reference for the review were deliberately inclusive to match the Department of Education's genuine interest in receiving open feedback. Specifically, the terms of reference were as follows

> ***The review was commissioned to establish***
>
> - *the views and educational aspirations of Aboriginal parents and community members in relation to their children's schooling, with particular reference to English literacy and numeracy*
> - *the key issues affecting educational outcomes for Aboriginal children*
> - *supportable actions for educational outcome improvements.*

Scope

Determining what to focus on within the time available meant that the review also had to rule out certain areas of investigation. Some areas are touched on but not researched in depth, including **the adult education and training sector, which we consider needs separate investigation in its own right**. Areas specifically excluded from this review include

- assessment of NTDE program evaluation processes
- assessment of the levels of NTDE compliance with the National Aboriginal Education Policy goals or of the scope and phraseology of former AEP policy documents
- assessment of curricula – in recognition of the more comprehensive review that was being conducted concurrently by the *Redesign of Curriculum Functions and Review of Assessment and Certification Task Group*. The findings of the curriculum review have since been submitted.

Consultation techniques

The review combined a number of techniques to ensure comprehensive consultation within a restricted timeframe. These included

- interviews, meetings and focus group sessions with internal and external stakeholders
- a call for submissions
- school case studies
- open forum public meetings in Darwin, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

In addition to targeted interviews, the review followed up numerous requests from individuals for direct contact and spoke to many others on a more informal and ad hoc basis as the review progressed. However, it should be noted that the listing of people interviewed at Appendix 1 includes only those who consented to formal, semistructured interviews.

Submissions

Four weeks after commencing the study, a call for submissions was released asking for public comment on the issues surrounding Indigenous education. Advertisements were placed in metropolitan and regional media and letters of invitation were sent to all schools together with relevant government, non-government and industry bodies. Submissions were invited in the form of written, audio or visual material.

Out of this process, the review received 106 formal submissions, including three videotapes. A full listing of submissions received is at Appendix 2.

The review has distinguished formal submissions from the many notes and papers given by individuals as part of our program investigations and document analyses which, owing to their volume, have not been separately indexed unless referred to directly.

Case study process

Indigenous children are represented in nearly all schools in the Northern Territory, which reflects the wide variety of circumstances in which Indigenous people live. There are 182 schools in the Territory—151 government, thirty-one non-government[1], of which

- 102 are government primary schools, eighteen are non-government primary schools
- eleven are government high schools, six are non-government high schools
- three are government secondary colleges (no non-government)
- twenty-nine are government mixed schools (Transition to Year 12) and seven non-government mixed schools
- five are government special schools (no non government)
- one is a government correspondence school (no non-government).

As part of the community consultations, the review conducted in-depth case studies of forty-four schools across the Northern Territory, representing approximately 25% of all schools. Of these forty-four case studies, thirteen were bilingual schools.

The review was principally interested in parental concerns and issues to do with educational effectiveness. Key questions guiding the review were: What do Indigenous parents, children and communities want from schools? What is going well? What is not going so well? What are the strategies for the future?

In each school, the review's preference was to conduct school-based group interviews during school hours and interviews with other community members in the afternoon and evening. This approach was modified to suit local requirements.

[1] This excludes Casuarina Evening Classes, and the fifty-six satellite outstations which are included as part of the hub schools.

The original intent of the review had been to concentrate visits on schools with reputed good practice and a record of achievement, with the idea of documenting what worked, rather than adding to the stockpile of material diagnosing what did not. Unfortunately, while such information should be at management fingertips, the work of the review was hampered by great difficulty in getting even superficial information on which schools had examples, however small, of best practice. The review was told in a formal meeting, 'You will have to go out to the schools to find that out'. The review then selected schools covering as wide and representative a range of different Indigenous educational environments as possible, from Darwin urban to remote outstations, including non-government schools. This process, as intensive as it was in a reasonable timeframe, regrettably may have missed schools that were 'quiet achievers' or where recent changes had seen improvements.

To augment system-level data about school staffing profiles and turnover rates, student attendance and absenteeism, the review undertook a questionnaire-based survey of all schools visited. At the same time, permission was sought from school communities for the review to access the school's Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP) data, which are collated from system-wide literacy and numeracy tests.[1] The quantitative data in this report draws upon material collated from a combination of departmental sources and responses to the review's case study questionnaires.

Previous reports

It is a truism that Indigenous people are the subjects of repeated investigations and research, a point that did not go unremarked by participants in this review. One remote area school submitted their Bilingual Appraisal Report, commenting

> This is a strong document, it is our word. But now we think that no-one in the Education Department has read our reports because now you are paying people to come and ask us what we want again. Every year you ask us and every year we tell you but you don't listen to what we say. Some community members say that you will keep asking until we tell you that we want to be Balanda, then you'll stop asking. We are not Balanda, our skin will always be black. (Submission to review)

Similarly, our attention was drawn to the range of previous reviews, reports and analyses circulating within departmental and academic literature that focuses on Indigenous education. In the words of one contributor

> Given the amount of work that has been done in Indigenous education in the last twenty years, it is hard to understand why the NT Education Department felt the need for another review. As Mick Dodson has said in relation to RCIADIC [Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody], the problem is not knowing what people want or what needs to be done, it is implementation of these findings by the responsible agencies. Moreover, a Senate Inquiry is also currently underway specifically to examine why these recommendations have not been implemented. (Submission to review)

[1] Permission to access MAP data was granted for all but one school.

This raises the issue of the context within which this review was conducted. Not only has Indigenous education been reviewed before, there were a number of significant events paralleling this review. These include

- The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education
- The Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee Inquiry into Indigenous Education
- The implementation of the 'Schools ... Our Focus' organisational restructure within the NTDE
- The NTDE bilingual consultations
- The departmental review of curriculum purpose and processes by the Redesign of Curriculum Functions and Review of Assessment and Certification Task Group
- The departmental review of IESIP.

Despite the flux of contemporary activity and plethora of previous material, the review nonetheless found all contributors had a generous willingness to go back over the issues. In the words of one participant

> I am pleased that this review is underway as acknowledgment that Indigenous Education in the NT is in a state of crisis. I believe that there is so much to be done if we are to give Indigenous children a fair go in schools, and if we are to provide education that will fulfil Indigenous community aspirations. (Submission to review)

The review benefited from such sentiments, and especially the ability of the submission-weary to take part in yet another government inquiry. Even so, it has been simultaneously affirming and disheartening to read previous analyses that repeatedly prefigure our conclusions. The most significant of these in the current context is the 1996 Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory Public Accounts Committee Report Number 27 *Report on the Provision of School Education Services for Remote Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory*, which provides eighty-three wide-ranging recommendations in twenty-nine key areas. (PAC 1996)

Public Accounts Committee Report Number 27

Many of the critical issues raised with the review during its consultation phase are mirrored in the PAC report. These issues are not always articulated in the PAC recommendations but can be found in the discussions, and thus their significance clearly did not escape the committee's attention. Where the concurrences or residual concerns are particularly significant, these are cross-referenced in the body of this report. More importantly, the underlying thrust of the PAC recommendations lies in the strategic impetus to accomplish increased, measurable and sustainable improvements in literacy and numeracy for Indigenous students. This message was not lost on the review.

The PAC report tells us a number of things which the review agreed with including

- many Indigenous parents being unaware of how poorly their children are achieving
- the problem of almost universal severe overcrowding in houses on Indigenous communities

- the occurrence of a domino effect of health and social problems leading to children suffering serious hearing loss, being malnourished and getting insufficient sleep which then leads to poor attendance and non-punctuality which impedes effective learning outcomes
- effective consultative processes needing to be established with Indigenous communities and with Indigenous organisations.

Some recommendations have been acted upon since the PAC report was tabled. For instance, the PAC found that Indigenous children who spoke no English, or very little English, were still not entitled to the level of assistance provided to migrant children under the ESL – New Arrivals program and in particular the provision of a student – teacher ratio of at least 10:1 (ibid: 13-14). Since 1998, the Northern Territory Department of Education has used the Commonwealth-funded ESL ILSS program to provide intensive ESL support to students during their first year of formal schooling. ESL ILSS was introduced to facilitate the entry of Indigenous students into education by providing intensive English language tuition to each eligible student. This program parallels the year of ESL support given to non-English-speaking migrants.

However, the main thrust of the departmental response to the PAC report at the time was to claim that there were no significant problems in its administration, and that 90% of the recommendations were either already attended to or were philosophically supported.[4] In substantiating this view, numerous programs, subprograms, projects and activities were listed which, while no doubt important, failed to demonstrate a strategic and cohesive approach aimed at relentless and sustainable improvements in the education of Indigenous students. Coupled with the defensive tone running throughout the document, the response would have done little to allay the concerns of the PAC.

Beyond the departmental response, there was little evidence of a committed and focused follow-up to the PAC report from a broader agency perspective. A central recommendation of this review and the PAC is that there must be high-level support by Government departments and Government itself to inextricably link education and health in Indigenous communities.[5] The two are synonymous. Failure to recognise and respond effectively to this reality results in an endless loop of poor outcomes in both. Housing and essential services are critical components in improving the environmental health problems of Indigenous people, which have such a devastatingly negative impact on learning outcomes. The coordination required must begin at the most senior levels through to formal links between the health providers and the schools in the communities themselves. The current situation at the community level appears to be an ad hoc process that, depending on the teachers and health service providers concerned, varies from good to almost non-existent. The review could find no systemic policy requirement to ensure schools and health centres work together in communities.

[4] The departmental response either supported or believed it already supported sixty-four of the recommendations, gave qualified support to eleven, and did not support eight recommendations.
[5] PAC Report No. 27 recommendations 12.1 and 20 refer.

Sociocultural context

Indigenous education must be examined in the context of the communities that it serves. There have been significant changes to that context over the past twenty to thirty years, making the educational challenge more difficult than it has ever been.

There is now a far higher level of income available that has provided benefits, but also a growing level of welfare dependency that is sapping the strength and morale of Indigenous communities. Students are more mobile than ever before with consequent disruption to their education. Substance abuse and violence with the resultant family and community disorder are now far greater problems than they were twenty years ago. Alcohol is more easily available and other drugs such as kava and marijuana (gunja) are having a significant impact and were unheard of then. The age at which Indigenous mothers are having their first baby is falling and many of these young mothers are then dropping out of the education system. A related issue is the number of other young children absent from school for 'childminding'. Over the past twenty years 'lifestyle diseases' related to obesity, alcohol, and cigarette smoking have become the chief contributors to morbidity and early death, highlighting the need for health and education services to work together to promote preventative health measures.

There has been a communications explosion in communities, particularly in the last decade, with the widespread introduction of television and videos. The unchecked use of this form of entertainment was widely cited across the Territory by students, teachers, parents and home liaison officers as a significant cause of the sleep deprivation that impacts so negatively on school-age students and on their educational outcomes. Because the authority of parents over their children has continued to erode—a factor not confined to Indigenous families— the need for programs offered at the school to be relevant, interesting, enjoyable, and challenging for students is greater now than it ever was. It needs to be acknowledged that in the difficult circumstances in which many Indigenous parents find themselves, some children don't attend school even when their parents actively try to get them there.

Over the same period of time there has been a strengthening of the desire of Indigenous people to regain control of their own lives. It is a source of great frustration to many—expressed often to the review—that lack of better educational outcomes is preventing this desire from being fully realised. This positive aspiration however, if properly supported by the educational partnerships recommended by the review, can be the foundation for Indigenous people to achieve the outcomes they want and deserve for their children.

The complexity of Indigenous education is reflected in the vast bodies of published and unpublished literature on the subject, and in the breadth of issues canvassed by contributors to this review. With some players in the Indigenous education arena, this complexity has fostered an analytical stance that argues unless the ultimate causes of poor educational outcomes are addressed, there is no point pursuing shorter-term solutions. Alternatively, the issues are so complex, so huge, there are no solutions. Both approaches in the opinion of the review are equally destructive to improving outcomes.

The view adopted in this report is that a range of immediate, medium and long-term solutions are required, some of which can be attended to by the NT Department of Education. Some require the involvement of other agencies and jurisdictions, and most require negotiation and discussion with Indigenous parents, families, community members and leaders.

Principles guiding the review

A framework for understanding the pathways to poor outcomes is illustrated below. A direct factor is one which has an immediate cause –effect relationship to poor educational performance and has clear impact at the classroom level; in turn, proximate factors underlie and contribute to the direct causes; while distal factors describe the wider environmental influences on overall educational outcomes. This framework is designed to illustrate connections that were considered most meaningful for analysis in terms of this review.[5]

Table 2: Causes of poor educational outcomes– a framework

DIRECT	PROXIMATE	DISTAL
Poor attendance, poor attention	• Poor health (students and carers), including hearing and nutrition • Mobility • Sleep deprivation • Family and community disruption • Distractions – sport, TV, travel, etc	• Unemployment • Overcrowding • Parent experiences of school • School–community relationship & history • Cultural priorities
Teacher turnover	• Housing • Salaries and conditions • Family facilities, e.g. access to secondary schools • Preparation and training • School leadership	• National teacher supply and demand • School facilities • Departmental valuing and responsiveness • Community relations
Language learning difficulties	• English as a second or foreign language • Poor health especially hearing impairment • Minimal exposure to Standard Australian English (SAE) and structured numeracy • Inadequate grounding in oral SAE • Ad hoc access to ESL/EFL programs	• Few sites other than the school for literacy/ numeracy tuition or reading opportunities • Inherent difficulty of English
Attrition	• Poor academic performance • Local social and family environment • Carers not fully aware of child's learning situation	• Secondary and adult education processes/ facilities • Unclear pathways to employment • Cultural priorities
Fragmented approaches	• Lack of policy coordination • Lack of outcomes data • Poor management systems	• Indigenous education historically peripheral to core business of NTDE

[5] It should be noted that each factor has its own complex aetiology of interrelated direct, proximate and distal causes and thus could be assembled in many different ways to highlight particular linkages. What is presented here highlights the priority issues that have become the focus of this report and does not aim to be either prescriptive or exhaustive.

Recommendations – Review process

It is recommended that

1 in order to be inclusive of all Indigenous Australians, the Aboriginal Education Branch be renamed the Indigenous Education Branch, consistent with the new peak body, the Indigenous Education Council of the Northern Territory

2 the term 'Indigenous' should be used in all instances to inclusively reflect both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Educational outcomes

There have been some significant advances in Indigenous education which tend to be obscured in the face of stark gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians. Reporting on 1971 census results, Betty Watts noted that 25% of Aboriginal people had never attended school, while of those with a primary school education, 50% had not achieved Years 6 and 7. (Watts 1979)

It is also important to acknowledge the notable successes of individual students, as the following information on Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE) results and NTU eligibility clearly demonstrate.

Table 3: Number of Indigenous students completing SACE(NT) or NTCE[1]

School location	1994		1995		1996		1997		1998	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
North	6	14	0	10	7	12	12	23	7	22
South	0	5	1	1	1	0	1	2	4	4
Subtotal	**6**	**19**	**1**	**11**	**8**	**12**	**13**	**25**	**11**	**26**
TOTAL	**25**		**12**		**20**		**38**		**37**	

Table 4: Number of Indigenous students eligible for entry into NTU

School location	1994		1995		1996		1997		1998	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
North	4	6	0	6	4	6	5	12	4	17
South	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	1
Subtotal	**4**	**10**	**0**	**7**	**4**	**6**	**5**	**13**	**6**	**18**
TOTAL	**14**		**7**		**10**		**18**		**24**	

[1] SACE(NT) South Australian Certificate in Education (Northern Territory), and NTCE Northern Territory Certificate of Education, refer to the forms of educational certificate received by students at the end of their final year of schooling.
[2] Source: Northern Territory Board of Studies (NTBOS) data covering all schools, government and non-government.

As Stephen Harris observes, talking here about urban schools

> there are teachers in Darwin (and Alice Springs and other NT towns) who successfully teach Aboriginal children. There are classrooms where Aboriginal children perform academically at and above the wider school norms ... given the right mix of social conditions and teaching practice Aboriginal children *do learn successfully* ... (Harris & Malin 1994: 124).

This point is reiterated by Batchelor College—now Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE)—in relation to non-urban schools, which notes in its submission that

> Good Indigenous schools do exist. There have been many Indigenous schools that have, from time to time, functioned cohesively and effectively. Such cohesion has been the result of a team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators working cooperatively under the leadership of a skilled principal towards a clearly articulated set of goals. (Submission to review)

Confirming these views, the review found many instances of dedicated teaching, of schools which are welcoming and have high expectations of their students, of communities where education has a high priority, and of individual students who are determined to do their best and clearly value their educational experiences.

The following data on outcomes should be interpreted with these critically important acknowledgments in mind.

Achievement data

Student progression

Across the Northern Territory in 1998, 14% of Indigenous students progressed from Year 8 to Year 12 compared with 80% of non-Indigenous students. Of the cohort reaching Year 12 in 1997, fifty-nine Indigenous students were enrolled in publicly examined subjects, thirty-eight obtained a SACE/NTCE score, and eighteen students were eligible for entry to the Northern Territory University: that is, using mainstream eligibility criteria rather than through specific Indigenous enabling programs. Of these, only one student hailed from the Central Australian region.

This compares to 544 non-Indigenous students who became eligible for NTU entry in the same period.

Figure 1: Retention rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students,1998

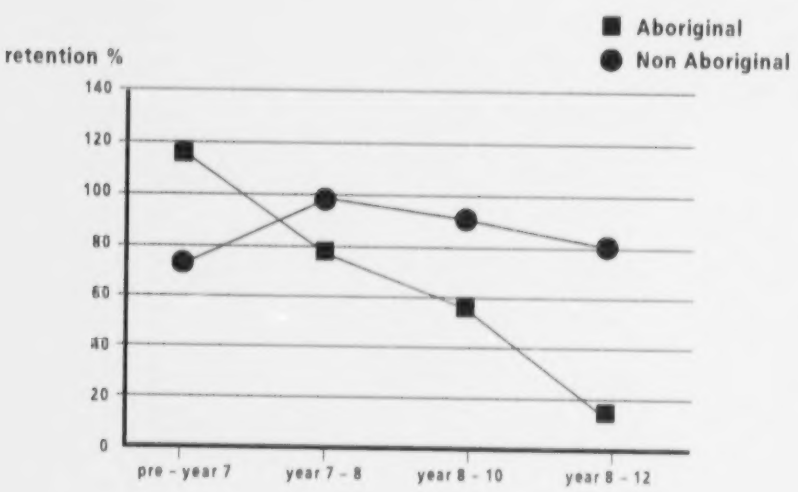


Table 5: NT Indigenous and non-Indigenous student progression

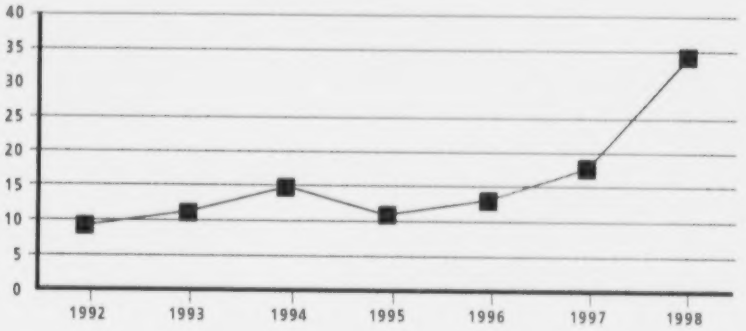
1997	Enrolled in publicly examined subjects	Obtained a SACE or a NTCE	Eligible for NTU
Indigenous	59	38	18
Non-Indigenous	769	660	544

Higher education

Despite the fact that Indigenous eligibility and enrolments at the NTU remain low, since 1995 there has been a steady improvement in the number of Indigenous students who have completed courses as Figure 2 illustrates. This is consistent with national trends.

Since 1992, Indigenous students enrolled at the NTU have predominated in the arts (34%) and education (42.5%) faculties, with far fewer enrolled in science (14.8%), business (5.9%),Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (5.9%), law (4.9%) and technology (0.9%).* A total of 111 Indigenous students graduated since 1992.

Figure 2: Indigenous students who have completed courses at NTU, 1992–1998



National benchmarks

In 1996 Education Ministers across Australia agreed to a uniform national framework for reporting achievement in literacy and numeracy. Subsequently, Ministers also agreed to establish national benchmarks setting the minimum acceptable standards for literacy and numeracy for Years 3 and 5. Work is currently underway to establish benchmarks for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9/10. The NTDE MAP tests administered in 1998 incorporated the new literacy benchmark items for the first time.

Out of the 1998 tests, only the benchmark data for reading was reported. The national Benchmark Equating Steering Committee, formed to establish a mechanism to ensure comparability of data from state-wide assessment, decided not to report the results for writing and spelling because the writing and spelling data were not comparable across the jurisdictions. Among the main reasons were wide variations in the instruments used and in the procedures for marking, scoring and weighting. Similarly, the numeracy benchmarks were not assessed by the other States because they were still in draft form, even though in the Northern Territory, numeracy testing was undertaken. The numeracy benchmark items were incorporated in the mathematics tests but the benchmark components at Years 3 and 5 were not analysed and reported separately by NTDE.

* Source: NTU data

The following summary of benchmark reading data for the different groups of students across the NT is analysed in three parts

- all—both urban and non-urban schools combined
- urban schools only
- non-urban schools only. Non-urban schools refers to schools with a predominantly Indigenous enrolment.

There are notable gaps in achievement between urban and non-urban which the combined figures for 'All students' tend to mask.

Table 6: Percentage of students achieving the reading benchmark in the NT, 1998[18]

Student Group	Year 3	Year 5
All (both urban and non-urban schools combined)		
All students	68%	62%
Indigenous students	31%	20%
Non-Indigenous students	82%	78%
ESL students	21%	15%
Non-ESL students	82%	74%
Non-Indigenous ESL students	60%	58%
Indigenous ESL students	9%	5%
Male students	66%	59%
Female students	70%	66%
Urban schools only		
All students	78%	71%
Indigenous students	54%	36%
Non-Indigenous students	82%	78%
ESL students	45%	37%
Non-ESL students	81%	74%
Male students	75%	66%
Female students	81%	78%
Non-urban schools conly		
All students	6%	4%
Indigenous Non-ESL students	25%	11%
Indigenous ESL students	2%	3%
Male students	5%	4%
Female students	5%	4%

Of concern is the disparity between all ESL non-Indigenous and ESL Indigenous students at both Years 3 and 5, although it is not possible to tell from the data what language groups are involved. This last concern is consequential in the light of research which establishes that the greater the cultural distance, linguistic and literacy differences between language learners, the more likely it is there will be difficulties for the learners involved (Amery 1989; August & Hakuta 1998; Crawford 1997; Hurd 1993).

[18] Source: NT Benchmarking data

Selected case study information

The overall results of benchmark testing are only part of the equation: it is important to examine the number of students who are eligible to sit the MAP tests, the number who actually participate, and the numbers of exempt and absent students. It is also important to take into account the level of test attempted and what the benchmarks are for a particular group. At the end of Year 3, it is expected that students achieve within Levels 2 and 3, with outstanding children at Level 4. At the end of Year 5 it is expected that students will achieve within Levels 3 and 4.

The following data describes results of the 1998 MAP tests in mathematics and reading for Indigenous students in Years 3 and 5 for only a limited selection of MAP test results collated by the review, which are nonetheless representative of the education issues facing Indigenous students in all areas studied.[11] These issues are

- lower participation rate in the tests than non-Indigenous students
- failure to meet the national reading benchmarks set for particular year groups
- significantly lower achievement in the tests than non-Indigenous students
- failure to show much improvement from Year 3 to Year 5.

Non-urban and urban averages are provided for comparison. The tables report the numbers eligible for and attempting the tests, and the graphs display test results.

Case study school mathematics results: Year 3, Level 2

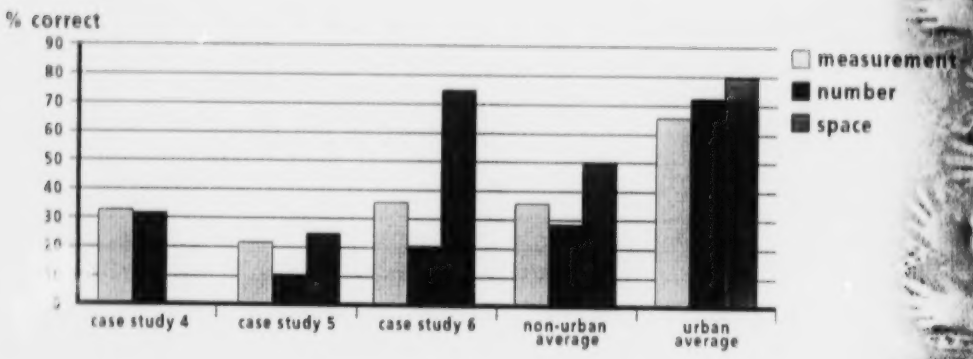
Data is presented below for participation in and outcomes of Year 3 and Year 5 mathematics testing, in three non-urban schools. As can be seen, with the exception o case study 6, participation levels and results achieved tend to be well below both the non-urban and urban averages.

Table 7: Participation rates 1998 Year 3 mathematics test, Level 2

School	No. of eligible students	No. exempt	No. Absent	Participation rate	Non-urban average participation rate	Urban average participation rate
Case study 4	9	6	2	22%	50%	87%
Case study 5	9	0	7	22%	50%	87%
Case study 6	4	0	0	100%	50%	87%

[11] Although the review team obtained MAP information from most of the case study schools, the data is too lengthy to be reported in its entirety.

Figure 3: Results of 1998 Year 3 mathematics test, Level 2



Case study school mathematics results: Year 5, Level 2

As can be seen in the case studies shown in Figure 4 some Indigenous students in Year 5 achieved scores above the non-urban average for the Level 2 test, and in some cases even approached the urban average. However, these apparently good results are deceptive, as it is expected that most Year 5 students achieve Level 3, not Level 2. Indeed, the great majority of urban Year 5 students (95%) start the test at Level 3. It should also be noted that the 100% participation rate for school case study 6 in fact refers to only one student.

Table 8: Participation rates 1998 Year 5 mathematics test, Level 2

School	No. of eligible students	No. exempt	No. Absent	Participation rate	Non-urban average participation rate	Urban average participation rate
Case study 4	6	0	1	83%	62%	5%
Case study 5	6	0	0	100%	62%	5%
Case study 6	1	0	0	100%	62%	5%

Figure 4: Results of 1998 Year 5 mathematics test, Level 2

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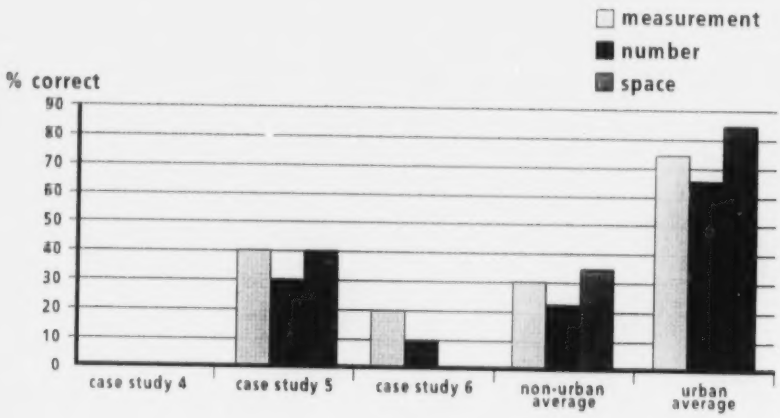
Case study school mathematics results: Year 5, Level 3

Table 9: Participation rates 1998 Year 5 mathematics test, Level 3

School	No. of eligible students	No. exempt	No. Absent	Participation rate	Non-urban average participation rate	Urban average participation rate
Case study 4	0	0	0	0	22%	96%
Case study 5	6	5	0	17%	22%	96%
Case study 6	1	0	0	100%	22%	96%

Figure 5: Results of 1998 Year 5 mathematics test, Level 3



Case study school reading results: Year 3, Level 2

The national reading benchmark for Year 3 students fall within Level 2. Data is presented below for participation in Year 3 and Year 5 reading tests. Despite the non-urban average for participation in the Year 3 test being 53%, no Year 3 students in any of the non-urban case study groups represented here attempted the test. As such, participation rates for Year 3 Level 3 test are not shown.

Table 10: Participation rates 1998 Year 3 reading test, Level 2

School	No. of eligible students	No. exempt	No. Absent	Participation rate	Non-urban average participation rate	Urban average participation rate
Case study 4	9	9	0	0	53%	75%
Case study 5	8	8	0	0	53%	75%
Case study 6	4	4	0	0	53%	75%

Case study school reading results: Year 5, Level 3

The national reading benchmark for Year 5 students falls within Level 3. As shown below, the participation rate for the non-urban schools at Level 3 is dramatically lower than the urban average. The results being achieved by the students at best are only 50% of what the urban students achieved. The most disturbing aspect of these results is that there is very little change between the Year 3 scores and those of Year 5. That is, there is no evidence of progression as a result of the extra years of schooling.

As illustrated below, no students attempted this level at school case study 6. For the two other case studies the participation rates were 33% and 80% respectively. This can be compared with the non-urban and urban average participation rates of 53% and 71%.

Table 11: Participation rates 1998 Year 5 reading test, Level 3

School	No. of eligible students	No. exempt	No. Absent	Participation rate	Non-urban average participation rate	Urban average participation rate
Case study 4	5	0	1	80%	53%	71%
Case study 5	6	4	0	33%	53%	71%
Case study 6	0	0	0	0	53%	71%

No Indigenous students in the above case study schools attempted Level 4 of the test.

It would appear that students in non-urban schools are more likely to be successful in mathematics than in English. The reading benchmarks, especially in Year 5, are rarely achieved. The failure of many Indigenous children to attempt the reading tests raises the question of the appropriateness of the testing materials for this subject.

Student assessment procedures

The review strongly supports an outcomes-based approach to Indigenous education, with the caveats on culture, language and remoteness issues that are addressed elsewhere in this report. **The review believes that the systemic absence of a strong outcomes-based approach over a long period of time has been a significant factor in the failure to achieve better outcomes.**

Schools and teachers are currently using a range of procedures to assess student academic performance and progress, from classroom observations and documentation of work in progress, through to individual subject area profiling and system-wide testing. Within some schools there is confusion about the application and purpose of the different forms of assessment. **Such confusion is unnecessary and should be repeatedly [12] clarified by NTDE.**

MAP testing will continue to be used in the system-wide assessment of education outcomes. Educators in the NT should ensure that the tests are modified if necessary to make them as credible a measure as possible for a macro-statistical tool in measuring outcomes in Indigenous education.

[12] 'Repeatedly' to account for high staff turnover

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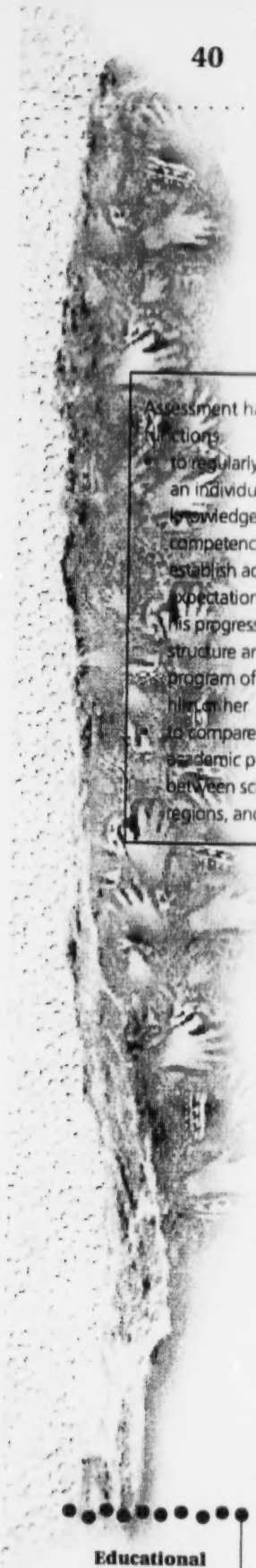

System tests and student monitoring

The review received widespread criticism of the use of MAP tests on the basis that they do not reliably measure Indigenous student achievement or capacities. Arguing that MAP tests were culturally inappropriate, one teacher suggested that 'children should not be isolated in test situations but should work in groups together rather than individual working and not being allowed to talk.' Another urban-based teacher raised her concerns about the insensitivity of the tests in terms of measuring a student 's true skills

> They can cope with the maths but the writing—forget it! They could do it with me, no worries. The ones that do best at these things are already independent learners and know how to learn. But the Indigenous kids, if I took them through it, they would be able to do it. It is such a general test, it doesn't reflect the child's needs. I can teach the kids and they can know it all, but [will] stress out in what is a horrible exam situation. The kids get flustered and it is just not a true reflection of their skills. (Case Study 14)

Assessment has two key functions:

- to regularly determine an individual's knowledge, skills and competencies so as to establish accurate expectations for her or his progress and to structure an appropriate program of learning for him or her
- to compare levels of academic progress between schools, regions, and States.

The concern was repeated in many remote schools

> MAP tests are frustrating. We know the kids can do the work but the way the questions are worded—it is inappropriate, and so the kids do worse than they should or could. It is really unfair on the kids to be judged that way and it makes the teachers who have to give the tests extremely angry. (Case Study 35)

Another view was expressed by an Indigenous teacher in an Arnhem Land school who said, 'I support MAP tests I just don 't like what politicians do with them'.

A teacher may use several different methods to monitor the ongoing performance of a child in their class, which can include direct questioning, maintaining a work dossier, and/or informal subject area tests. These idiosyncratic methods provide rich detail about the individual and are sensitive to the child's fluctuations over the day, week and year. However, they do not substitute for standardised testing methods, which are designed both to provide rigorous comparative information, and to meet national benchmark measurement requirements. The MAP tests aim to fulfil this second function of testing: namely, system-wide comparative information. In the context of high staff turnover, and subsequently variable emphases on producing and maintaining informative records of student attainment and progress, system-wide tests have an additional pertinence in the Northern Territory.

Accordingly, the review supports the recommendation of the Redesign of Curriculum Functions and Review of Assessment and Certification Task Group that, despite their shortcomings, the MAP tests should be retained

> for purposes of obtaining national comparable data on students' English literacy and numeracy achievements, and meeting our commitment to the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) to report nationally against literacy and numeracy benchmarks. (Task Group 1999: 9)

Teacher training in MAP testing and the processes for preparing children for MAP testing is also recommended.

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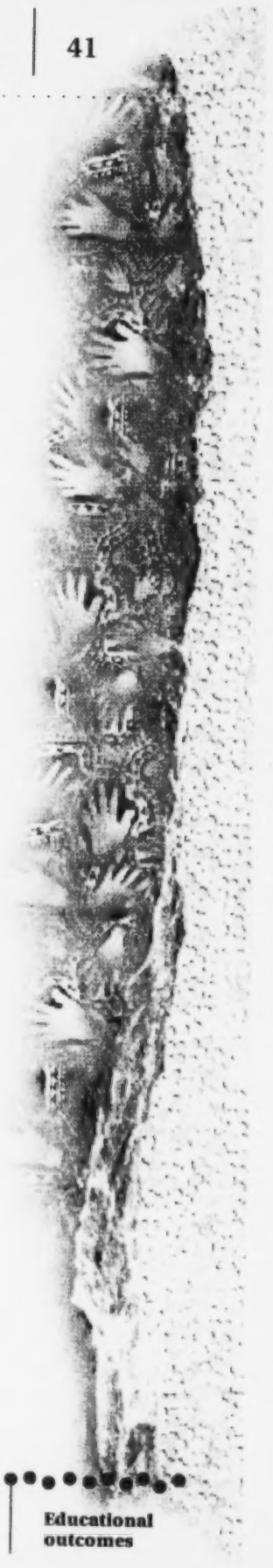

Feedback of MAP results

The Public Accounts Committee Recommendation 25.4 was 'That a simplified analysis of MAP results go to school councils in Aboriginal communities. The analysis should include the schools' overall results showing comparison with the average of Aboriginal schools and with NT-wide standards' (PAC 1996: 86). Confirming the PAC 's emphasis, during the course of this review, Indigenous parents repeatedly stressed they were keen to have information on how well their children are going compared to Indigenous children in other schools and with non-Indigenous children more generally

> We want to know about our kids, how they are going, so we can pick it up straight away. But we don't have any information like that. We want to know about other schools. There is no compare stuff you know? We've got to know, because we want our kids to learn and be somebody when they grow up, instead of doing silly things—that's why our kids are at school. (Case Study 32)

> Communities and parents want more information from schools particularly in the area on which students require help and in what areas. Information on which students are doing well would allow the community to fund further education for these students. The community would like to see government scholarships to allow bright students to enter university. (Submission to review, Aboriginal Economic Development Advisory Committee)

However, this parental and community interest in comparative information is currently thwarted on a number of counts.

- The MAP data has only recently been obtained in such a way that valid comparisons can be made between urban and non-urban based schools and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. In fact, as discussed above, until 1998, the tests were conducted with different age cohorts, with generous exemption possibilities, no ability to make urban/non-urban comparisons, and no benchmarks upon which to chart improvements.
- The sample sizes from many schools tested in 1998 are too small to allow meaningful statistical analysis, due in part to the continuing high exemption rates.
- Tests are administered by teachers who often have an ambivalent attitude regarding the MAP process—instanced in the words of one remote area school principal that 'MAP testing is just another chore the school has to do ', to the extent in some cases of actively encouraging cheating. 'MAP tests are crap —at [— school], the teachers fill them in for the kids. Here, I didn't insist they fill in the forms with pre-supplied answers and I regret that '. [1] Equally, students may absent themselves if they are able to anticipate a test day: as one teacher advised, 'when the kids know the MAP tests are being done, they stay away'.
- As per the PAC Recommendation 25.4, the prime mechanism for reporting to parents is through a report prepared specifically for the school council, which, in addition to potentially presenting misleading statistical samples, is not in an easily interpretable format, either in terms of visual layout or explanatory text.

[1] The ambivalence was not always so negatively expressed. More often, teachers were concerned about the uses to which test data would be put and concerned to have the tests made more culturally appropriate. Typical of these are of the following sentiments: People are marking these tests and grading them without knowing anything about the student and without having any background on the student. I don't like the idea of grading students when they are just a number, when the children are anonymous. But we are in a white mans system. I agree testing kids is not a true indication of a kid'ability but for comparison you do need some sort of standardised testing. But what was tested the language, and the amount of reading required—was disgusting'. (Case Study 14)

System testing in an ESL context

Another frequent criticism of MAP tests are that they are not designed to sensitively measure speakers for whom English is a second language.

> I don't like the MAP tests. When you are assessing a program like ESL, it is a huge mistake to focus on literacy alone. Why not test how well children speak? It would be more appropriate for us to use a more complex series of assessments. It is unfair on the children.

The review received arguments that MAP testing at Grade 3 for bilingual children yields a misleading representation of the child's abilities, particularly as at this stage the students would have had predominantly vernacular oracy and literacy development combined with limited oral English instruction. In other words, English literacy development has barely commenced. It is likewise argued that children in non-bilingual schools are equally unprepared for testing at this stage, as for them, English is a second or foreign[14] language, an argument which is seen as applying to urban as well as remote area children. As such, students would not have developed sufficient English oracy—a prerequisite to literacy and numeracy—to allow academic parity with students for whom English is their first, and probably only, language.

The review was sympathetic to these arguments but remained concerned at the seeming inability to nominate the appropriate testing ages for standard tests. Is it that the tests are completely inappropriate, or is it that they are being applied at the wrong age? Would a validated ESL/EFL instrument allow testing at any age and still yield comparative data? ESL profiling goes some way toward but does not fully clarify the issues involved.

In the first instance, the NTDE needs to establish

- what are reasonable expectations for a student being tested in a language in which the student has limited proficiency
- when ESL students should be expected to be ready to undertake the same assessments as first language English speakers
- whether it is possible to establish common benchmarks for ESL and first-language English speakers and test for these.

[14] The term 'English as a foreign language' is used to describe the situation where English was and continues not to be part of the surrounding environment, i.e. it is introduced. As will be discussed later in this report, in many communities, the school is one of the few sites where Australian Standard English is regularly spoken. However, it is difficult for many in Australia to conceptualise English as a foreign language when talking about long-term Australian residents as opposed to recent immigrants, and so the term may fail to signal what its users intend.

There is a national commitment to measuring every child against agreed literacy and numeracy benchmarks which should be honoured. Since 1998, every student is being tested against the national benchmarks and if students can 't attempt the test, they will still be included and recorded in the percentage results. The establishment of appropriate achievement levels for ESL students would be used as contextual information for understanding the results of national benchmarking tests. As a senior NTDE officer told the review

> We don't want any groups of children being marginalised and excluded from consideration under the national priorities. In fact, of all children, those who are least likely to perform well under benchmark testing are those who deserve our critical attention. However, clearly ESL children can't be expected to achieve the benchmarks without competent well-resourced ESL teaching support, and they will take longer to get there. For this reason, it is important to supplement the analysis of the benchmark results with an assessment of the progress towards English literacy of the ESL learner.

Outcomes profiling

In 1994, a set of documents titled *Statements and Profiles for Australian Schools* that had been developed collaboratively by States and Territories was completed and recommended for use throughout all schools. After trialling the documents, in 1996 the NT Board of Studies developed NT Outcomes Profiles for the eight nationally agreed learning areas, plus an outcomes profile for English as a Second Language. These documents, together with sample report formats and computer software, were distributed to all schools. The student profile provides a comprehensive description of a student' s level of achievement in each of a series of strands within each of the eight key learning areas.[15] It maps the student on a series of continua using a number of different assessment strategies to determine achievement levels.

The review found that profiles are well-supported in schools, especially ESL profiles, although many complained about the bureaucratic overlay that accompanies the reporting. Recommendation 38 of the Redesign of Curriculum Functions and Review of Assessment and Certification Task Group is 'that the board mandated activity of "profiling" should be discontinued' (Task-Group 1999: 9). The review understands that this recommendation was in response to feedback received by the curriculum review consultancy team that the requirement to profile every student in eight key learning areas in each of a multitude of strands is prohibitively onerous. This refers to the current NTDE requirement that by 2002, all teachers are expected to make a record 'profiling' decisions for every student in each of the eight learning areas, generally twice a year, and report profile information to parents at least once per year. This process requires teachers to identify, record and report for each student in a class whether the student is 'beginning', 'consolidating' or 'achieving' in one of eight levels, or ten levels in the case of ESL, in each of a number of strands across all eight learning areas. There are thirty-nine strands in total, ranging from three in English, to seven in Health and Physical Education.

> One of the anticipated outcomes of profiling students is that reports will enable parents to be informed about whether their child is achieving at appropriate levels for their age based on national standards. The first efforts in this direction that commenced in 1998 met with widespread complaint from parents and teachers that the reports were unintelligible—further work is being done to improve the parent reporting aspect.

[15] Some students may be profiled in ESL instead of English, although ESL is not a key learning area.

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There is considerable confusion within NTDE about what the Curriculum Review Recommendation 38 means in practice, which needs to be clarified. Several remote area principals have argued the importance of profiling as a framework for teacher planning and student monitoring and expressed their concern that Recommendation 38 will dispense with outcomes profiles altogether. Profiles are viewed as a form of mandated quality control where otherwise the temptation is to lower standards and expectations. In the words of one teacher, 'This system replaces the mix of approaches that was in place before'.

It is the understanding of this review that Recommendation 38 simply aims to dispense with the system requirement to profile all students in all strands of each learning area. It does not intend that outcomes profiles should be dispensed with. The Curriculum Task Group believes that outcomes profiles should continue to be used to monitor student achievement and to inform teachers' planning and programming so that they can help students achieve the outcomes of the various learning areas. If Recommendation 38 is accepted, it is simply the 'bureaucratic overlay' associated with profiling that will no longer be mandated at system level. Schools, however, may choose to continue profiling in any or all learning areas if they wish.

Even so, this review considers it important that ESL profiles are mandated for use by teachers as a means of mapping and ensuring the progress of identified ESL students (see also Breen et al. 1997: 179-3). The review accepts the need to simplify the task for teachers to reduce the reporting load. We therefore recommend that consideration be given to mandating ESL profiles for Indigenous students who use vernacular, creole or Aboriginal English as their first language. Effort should be made to ensure that the task set for teachers is realistic and achievable and that teachers are provided with support to develop and maintain appropriate assessment and recording practices.

Secondary assessment

The review received a number of representations from parents in both urban and remote areas detailing how difficult it is for parents of secondary students to follow what is happening with their children. This reflects the increasingly complex nature of secondary education across the board, which is fast making secondary pathways a recipe in confusion for all parents.

Special Category Curriculum (Bridging) courses are moderated and certificates are issued at the end of the General and Foundation Studies courses which are simply statements of completion of units of work. Departmental staff and teachers have understandably joined in with communities to celebrate attainments in bridging and remedial courses but the experience of the review is that there is limited understanding of the status of such courses in relation to mainstream academic attainments.

This is sometimes also the case with students who are in remedial courses at residential colleges. Indigenous assistant teachers from a remote area community in the Top End said of the children that left their small school for boarding school:

> The kids don't know they are behind the Balanda kids. We talked to the parents about the need to get our kids to mainstream level, that our kids are really low in college. I think we are sending kids too early—we should keep them here until they understand and can do the work better but I think the teachers are just sending them by age. They fall behind and it is a real shame job. It is sad. They are our best students. (Case Study 27)

Parents of Indigenous students within the larger urban high schools put it to the review that they are being misled with reassurances that their children are doing well, only to discover they are in subject areas which feature lesser emphases on dense reading and writing, or are in the lowest achievement tracks. Junior Secondary Studies Certificates (JSSC) testify that the requisite number of core units were covered in the right period of time but successful completion of the JSSC is not a prerequisite for Stage 1 and 2 of post-compulsory school Years 11 and 12. It likewise proved difficult for the review to get a clear picture of where Indigenous students are placed when they are in mainstream secondary institutions.

The review was told that in the past, the processes for generating achievement data—MAP testing, Year 10 and senior secondary test results—were mainly undertaken to please the Board of Studies but not to inform the operational decisions made to meet the objective of improving student learning outcomes. Indeed, there is no apparent link between student assessment results and change management practices.

Parents of Indigenous students are anxious to be better informed so that they are better able to guide their children through a critical schooling period. The curriculum review reforms will simplify some of the complexity but the onus is on secondary schools to ensure that parents are given accessible, meaningful and relevant information on the children. Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA) committees and AIEWs can play a role but the review considers it is the broader responsibility of the school to explain its workings clearly.

Good practice: Parent feedback at Barunga CEC

One afternoon per week, an Indigenous staff member visits Indigenous parents in the community together with a non-Indigenous staff member. The purpose of the visit is to provide personalised and regular information to the parents on their child's or children's progress at the school. Working in partnership, the two school representatives ensure that if there is any negative feedback, it is always preceded by two accounts of something positive or affirming about the student. While the review was there, a father was asked permission to move his daughter to a higher achieving class of regular attendees and was shown proof of the advances she had made in her reading since the family had begun ensuring her regular attendance. Visibly pleased, the father readily agreed. A non-attendance list is also displayed at both the council office and at the community store, at the request of the community. The store manager refuses to serve school-age children during school hours and there is a clear and active link between the community council and the school.

Recommendations – Student assessment

System testing

It is recommended that

3 the Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP) tests be retained.

4 effort is made to provide professional development programs to teachers to support their understanding of the different purposes of testing and assessment.

Feedback

It is recommended that

5 NTDE develops means of making feedback of the results of MAP data meaningful and accessible to Indigenous parents, in line with their clearly stated interest in comparative information.

6 an information strategy is implemented to ensure the national benchmarking process is clearly explained to parents and school-based staff.

7 work is commenced immediately on the school council reports of MAP results to

- replace the dense introductory text with understandable information
- ensure that the results stand out clearly and are meaningfully represented
- provide clear explanations of what the profile levels are meant to mean.

8 the revised MAP reporting format for school councils is tested with Indigenous people in remote areas for clarity and accessibility.

9 schools explore alternative models of communicating student progress to parents, noting the good practice examples that already exist in schools.

English as a second language (ESL)

It is recommended that

10 NTDE issues a clear statement establishing

- the reasonable expectations for a student being tested in a language in which the student has limited proficiency
- when ESL students should be expected to be ready to undertake the same assessments as first-language English speakers
- whether it is possible to establish common benchmarks for ESL and first-language English speakers and test for these

Profiling

It is recommended that

11 ESL profiles are mandated for use by teachers as a means of both mapping and ensuring the progress of identified ESL students.

12 NTDE urgently evaluates the mandating of mathematics and English profiles for remote area Indigenous students in the light of the Curriculum Review Recommendation 38 and provides clear direction for schools on their use.

Secondary assessment

It is recommended that

13 secondary schools ensure that parents are given accessible, meaningful and relevant information on the educational progress of their children and the course options available.

Management systems

Schools are complex organisations of a special kind. They carry enormous aspirations of parents, the community and government and responsibility for developing our youth to participate in what we hope will be an inclusive and equitable society. Like any other complex systems, they have the normal range of management tasks underpinning the delivery of their core activity—which in this case is education. To deliver their core activity well, organisations need demonstrable achievement in managing the inputs: human resource management, financial management, procurement and quality control; and they need to measure the outcomes of these activities to make sure they are on track. Like other complex organisations, school-based management needs fundamental data and related tools to operate effectively—they need to know if they are failing or succeeding, they need to be able to track their costs, and with reasonable accuracy, track their outcomes.

As highlighted on several occasions in this report, the review has found that there are major system and school deficiencies in regard to these management tools.

The only schools ever systematically evaluated were bilingual schools which had to undertake reaccreditation every three years, resulting in a substantial report which was assessed by an appraisal panel. The review found there is no similar documentation or appraisal of non-bilingual schools, either urban or remote, although school action plans and annual school principal reports do exist which, it might be argued, are similar accountability mechanisms. Schools receive very little feedback on these plans and reports when they are submitted for system consideration. The bilingual process, in the past decade moved from independently assessed evaluations to what many believe to be watered-down self-assessments. The superintendent or the principals did not always act upon the recommendations made in the appraisals.

It is apparent that for decades there has been no interest at departmental or government level in a dispassionate analysis of the educational outcomes of Indigenous students. Indeed, the review received credible evidence from current and former departmental officers that there had been a deliberate approach of burying or 'toning down' information about the poor results being achieved by Indigenous students. For example, one highly qualified professional educator who worked on a report on the achievement levels of Indigenous students across the Territory was told to 'beef-up' any positive results and downplay any negatives. When this was done and the report remained a sad reflection on outcomes achieved, he was instructed to 'put it in a box under your desk'. The report, provided by the author to the review, was thus 'available' but never distributed.

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Many of the review's concerns about the impact of departmental management systems on the ability to deliver quality Indigenous educational services are noted in the February 1999 Auditor-General's Report to the Legislative Assembly. The Auditor General 's report highlights that there was insufficient long-term departmental planning. Rather the approach had been the development of short-term projects and programs with no links to a strategic corporate focus, with the consequence that the department did not appear to have had a planning culture or ethos.

The review shares the Auditor General 's concern that annual report data on student educational achievement was not in a trend over time format, and/or related to an acceptable benchmark. The absence of trend data in the annual report demonstrates that there has been a lack of a strategic approach. The audit identified that the department needed to ensure planned outcomes could be reasonably measured, monitored and appropriately reported and comparisons made of previous students' performance with planned targets of student performance. Importantly, the Auditor-General states that 'quantification of how 'improvement' was to be assessed could not be obtained from the Annual Reports'. A long-serving bush principal—now academic—said to the review

> I have discussions with people who argue against the notion of any 'Golden Age' in Aboriginal education, be that the Mission era or any other era. Perhaps those people are correct. But what is true is that record keeping has always been so poor that we will never really know.

School reporting systems

Action plans for school improvement

The main formal vehicle for principals to set and achieve outcomes at the school level are action plans for school improvement (APSIs) which are agreed sets of annual priorities and actions that have been adopted by the school council/community.

These action plans are prepared by the staff and the school council and submitted to the superintendent. A school annual report is prepared by the principal to inform councils annual general meeting on progress toward implementing the previous year' s APSI. The review found that most schools visited had APSIs, kept in easily accessible places such as the school staff room or in the principal 's office. Although some schools stated that they frequently refer to the plans throughout the year, others simply said that it was there to look at if they needed to. The review was told that due to the changes and restructuring within the department, some schools had not fully complied with the departmental requirement of reviewing the school action plan annually.

The review found that if school communities put a lot of effort into it, principals considered the process was good for team building and clarifying the shared objectives of the school. Such schools felt that while a lot of work is involved in undertaking the consultation with the school community, it is important that it continue to happen. The APSIs provide a vehicle for the school and the community to continue to foster partnerships, so together they can decide where they want to go in the school year.

However, its value as an evaluation and accountability tool is limited. In terms of departmental accountability, the main emphasis has been on the process and not the outcomes of the APSI. In no instance was any school able to state they had received any feedback from the wider department on either the content of or the efforts put toward

creating the school action plans, let alone goal achievement. It appears to the review that, in the apparent absence of any wider strategic uptake of the school action plans, the process is not achieving its full accountability and management planning potential.

School annual reports

School annual reports are a recent initiative, introduced in 1997, to demonstrate higher levels of accountability in individual schools. They annotate key inputs such as staff turnover, participation and achievement data, buildings, action plans for school improvement and major initiatives. The reports are submitted to superintendents, and through the superintendent, to Deputy Secretary, School Services Division. Again, the feedback from many principals was that the annual reports are religiously prepared, using a template requiring great detail against different categories, but little or no feedback is received.

The review considers it imperative that the school annual reports have a relentless focus on student learning outcomes. This simultaneously requires a clear determination from the wider system that Indigenous education is a priority, with every effort taken to support and affirm school actions taken to improve outcomes for indigenous students.

Recommendations – School and system reporting

School annual reports
It is recommended that

14 school annual reports be the key mechanism for the school 's accountability within the system.

15 school annual reports have a relentless focus on student outcomes.

16 NTDE ensures these annual reports are responded to by senior management with critical analysis, both positive and negative, of the school's performance.

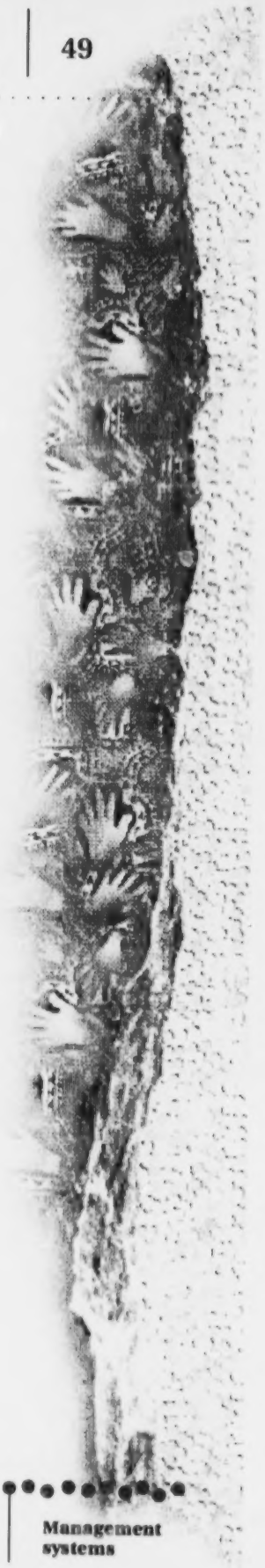
System reporting
It is recommended that

17 NTDE ensures there is an unequivocal outcomes-based approach applied across the whole of Indigenous education supported by objective assessment using agreed system-wide benchmarks.

18 schools and principals increase their efforts to use the data to explain to parents and children consequences of educational decisions made on their behalf.

Information technology and telecommunications (IT & T)

The common statement that we are entering an information revolution that will generate change akin to the industrial revolution might sound like hype if it weren't for the evidence in front of us. Any education system that does not equip students with core computer literacy will fail to provide a skill as essential as basic literacy for life in the 21st century. Failure to deliver sound IT skills in the remote and sparsely populated regions for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students will compound their disadvantage. Similarly, any large complex organisation that does not take full advantage of IT & T systems to radically improve efficiency and decision-making processes will not survive in the new millennium.



In the health portfolio, outputs-based funding and the promise of short-term delivery of savings through reduced acute care costs have driven the rapid development of sophisticated IT & T systems. However, the benefits for Indigenous students of increased investment in IT & T within education tend to be made on educational outcomes, social justice and equity grounds. But IT & T also has less tangible but more significant and long-term benefits for management, which are of equal concern to the review. Accordingly, this section briefly covers the pedagogic and staff development potential of IT & T before discussing the administrative benefits that must also be realised to enable outcome improvements.

Benefits for students

A belief in the benefits of integrating computers into the curriculum for Indigenous students is widely held. Many respondents cited the ease with which Indigenous students are thought to be able to use multimedia systems, due to the added presence of graphical and audio communications to the normal text-based material. Other respondents identified the benefits of computer systems with headphones to overcome the high levels of hearing impairment.

Despite this anecdotal evidence, it is difficult to correlate access to computers with learning outcomes because of the high levels of variability in the use of systems across schools. However, the 1996 National Literacy Survey found that

> Where teachers made greater use of ... school computers, students'achievements in most strands were higher. The use of a school technology centre also was associated with higher achievement... (Masters & Forster 1997: 207)

The recent development of the Internet has greatly increased the value of computers in remote areas as the obstacle of distance in access to learning material is greatly reduced. In theory the students can learn more independently and explore at their own rate with online systems. The Internet can also provide students with access to global resources and a greatly enhanced capacity to communicate outwardly. School and community libraries have an important role to play in the development and delivery of information literacy programs.

Benefits for teachers

Teachers are the critical link in any initiative to widen the use of IT & T systems in Indigenous education. Yet from their perspective it could be just one more thing to learn on top of the other challenges and turmoil that accompy remote-area teaching. The review recognises that teachers will need real support and will need to be convinced that there is value in it for them.

The major benefit teachers will derive from good IT & T systems is their power as a learning tool and the access they provide to a vast range of teaching resources. For teachers in remote areas, IT & T systems can also provide access to professional development resources and help to break down the communication barriers posed by isolation to stay in touch with colleagues and the system. Many modern corporations are using these technologies to share knowledge and further, as they disperse their workforces away from large offices, to improve performance and reduce costs. The education system is already a dispersed organisation and should be able to use such knowledge-based systems to identify and implement best practices across the schooling network.

It is recommended that strategies be developed for the provision of appropriate support through specialist, technical and professional development support and the consistent computer and communications infrastructure. To this end the teacher training organisations including NTU and BIITE must incorporate minimum levels of competence in integrating computers and online content into the curriculum as components of teacher training. Teachers who are already in place must also be given opportunities to upgrade their skills in these areas.

Administrative benefits

The original IT & T systems were deployed in commercial organisations to manage the allocations of resources—financial and personnel systems— and track and measure outcomes—inventory, asset management and quality assurance. In education, a num ber of key business systems are used to manage resources including CBASS, GAS, PIPS and TIS. These systems and the surrounding business processes have failed to keep pace with the new demands for management and statistical information required by principals and central administrators. This lack of solid outcomes not only results in poor decisions on resource allocations but could threaten Federal funding levels in the trend to outcomes-based funding.

The review found that within schools there is no consistent automated method for recording basic enrolment, attendance, staffing or student outcome data. Systems are required to meet these basic management information requirements across all schools. Any system that is put in place, however, must make life easier for people at the chalkface. That is, the people inputting the material must get commensurate value out of the data. Likewise, it is important that the information is captured at a transactional level in schools and is part of a daily routine, rather than an added chore to be done as part of the monthly management reporting cycle or in response to central office demands.

These requirements apply to all schools. The added relevance for Indigenous students and schools in remote areas is that the resource inputs are higher yet the outcomes are much worse. While there are isolated examples of excellent local school management systems, driven in the main by enthusiastic principals and teachers, the variety of systems and lack of mandate for standardised approaches, makes it impossible to integrate data for system-wide analysis or allow tracking of students. Similarly, schools differentially supply computer hardware and software to students and teachers, but in many cases the computers gather dust due to lack of funds, technical support or teacher skills; or at best are used by students to play computer games and have limited educational effect.

IT funding strategies

It is a paradox that those in remote areas who have the most to gain from access to teaching and learning resources using information and communications technology are the most difficult and costly to service. **A real danger exists that invaluable education tools such as the Internet instead of providing greater equity between town and bush will simply deepen the existing inequity.**

The extension of good IT & T systems to span Indigenous education requires the same, if not greater levels of investment in infrastructure and organisational development as that required for urban students. However the lack of local technical support, uneven levels of staff expertise and harsh environmental conditions will demand additional effort in remote schools. The government approach needs to accept that more will need to be spent in the short term to achieve the longer-term outcomes of improved learning and ultimately lower costs through better resource allocation.

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There are many opportunities to reduce the costs to implement the required IT & T systems by exploiting shared infrastructure —communications links and technical support—that will be required to support the services of other NTG and Federal Government agencies and the needs of the wider Territory community. There is also a large pool of federal funds available, including through the Regional Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (RTIF), to implement greater access to electronic information systems for the widely dispersed communities in the Northern Territory. This will be complemented by even greater levels of funding that will flow from the social bonus program associated with the second Telstra float.

To integrate these efforts the department must work closely with the major NTG agencies with an interest in the communities and IT & T services such as Territory Health Services, the Police, the Department of Local Government and the Department of Corporate and Information Services. In turn the NTG agencies and educational providers need to develop strong working partnerships with Indigenous management through ATSIC and land councils and community organisations to present a united case for Federal Government funds.

Recommendations – Information technology & telecommunications

It is recommended that

19 NTDE harnesses the advancing wave of communications capacity coming with the new communications systems and services to network all schools including major remote sites.

20 NTDE integrates the implementation and support of remote communications and desktop service provision to schools with other Northern Territory Government (NTG) agencies, e.g. Territory Health Services (THS), Police, Department of Corporate and Information Services (DCIS) and local councils and the community.

21 NTDE implements a comprehensive student tracking system allowing Indigenous students to be traced through the system and ensure their achievements are recorded.

22 NTDE investigates the opportunities to share the client tracking systems developed by THS for its community health systems and the Education Department of Western Australia.

23 NTDE ensures that any new resource management systems satisfy the basic outcome data requirements to track outcomes for Indigenous students and be scaled to allow remote schools with minimal technical and administrative support to be full players.

24 NTDE works closely with Northern Territory University (NTU), Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) and other training organisations to ensure that all teachers have a minimum level of computer literacy and related teaching competencies.

25 NTDE institutes and resources dedicated cross-program project teams to share resources with other NTG agencies and harness Federal Government funding in partnership with Indigenous management to improve access to information technology & telecommunication (IT & T) systems in remote areas.

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Funding and costs

The review does not accept the argument that resources alone will address the full gamut of issues in Indigenous education. However, if the specialised needs of Indigenous students are to be fully catered for, improving Indigenous education will inescapably involve increased outlays. It is imperative that every effort is made toward increasing the resources available to NTDE in the pursuit of system-wide improvements and that NTDE activities are themselves well-costed and geared for maximum achievement with minimal wastage.

Overall, the Commonwealth and Northern Territory global budget for all education is $330.1 million annually, with the combined commitment toward Indigenous education being approximately $137 million of that amount.

Of the $137 million, approximately $109.1 million comes from NT expenditure and $28.2 million from the Commonwealth. [15]

Table 12: NT Department of Education expenditure 98/99

	Total expenditure	Indigenous education
NT expenditure	**$274.2 million**	**$109.1 million (39.8%)**
C'wealth-funded program expenditure	$42.3 million	$23.0 million
General Recurrent Grant	$13.6 million	$5.2 million
Commonwealth-funded expenditure	**$55.9 million**	**$28.2 million (50.4%)**
TOTAL COMBINED EXPENDITURE	**$330.1 million**	**$137 .3 million (41.6%)**

The methodology for deriving these apportionments is as follows

- Breakdown of total NT Education 98/99 expenditure by ledger subprogram.
- Apportion expenditure in each subprogram by associated percentage of Indigenous student enrolments respectively. For example, under the Urban Pre and Primary School program, each subprogram (schools) is apportioned by its respective percentage of Indigenous enrolment.
- Subprograms where associated percentage enrolments are not available—apportionment is obtained from sections that are responsible for or working closely with those programs. For example, students with disability program apportionment were obtained from student services.
- Indigenous portion of the General Recurrent Grant was estimated using the DETYA per capita formula.

[15] It is important to note that while the total expenditures stated in this report are the actual expenditure recorded in the ledger, the expenditures for Indigenous students are derived using the methodology stated above and therefore will not stand any audit. In other words, the expenditures for Indigenous students included in this report should not be quoted unless the method by which these estimates are derived is clearly specified.

Commonwealth–Territory roles and relationships

Commonwealth IESIP program

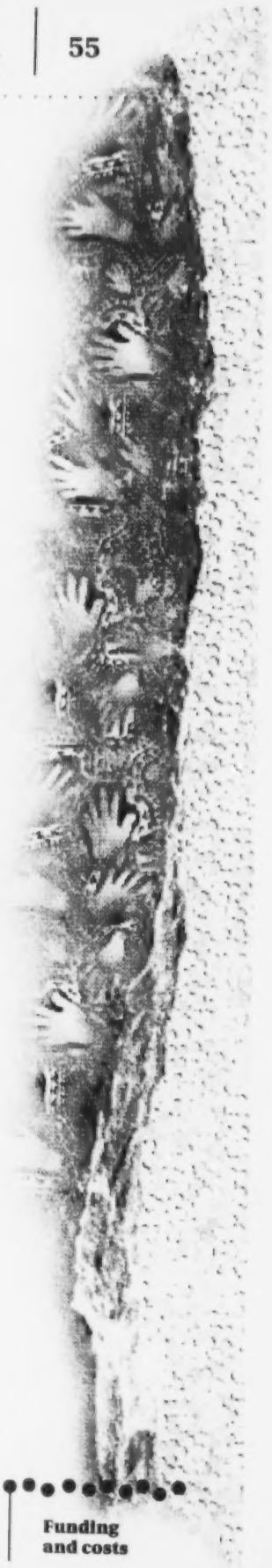
The Commonwealth's Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) funding is supplementary to the recurrent grants provided to the Northern Territory to support the education of all students. The $137 million Commonwealth funding includes approximately $10 million ($9 917 762) of Commonwealth supplementary monies allocated under the triennially funded IESIP. IESIP funds thirty-two programs involving 120 staff and is supervised by thirty-two managers. The funding is linked to performance indicators and improvement targets across a range of areas. IESIP is aimed at eight key priority areas: English literacy; numeracy skills; employment of Indigenous teachers and other staff; grade progression; retention to Year 12; high school completions; involvement of Indigenous Australians in the education decision-making processes; and increasing the culturally inclusive nature of education.

The present structure for administration of the IESIP is grossly top heavy, inherently inefficient and more significantly, ineffective. The fragmented structure contributes to a lack of focused and coordinated effort to achieve, track and accurately report on improved outcomes for students. The review recommends that the existing administrative arrangements be immediately discontinued and the program be administered by the Aboriginal Education Branch as a single unit tightly focused on improving outcomes for students.

Despite significant annual government expenditure on Aboriginal Education over $130 million in 1998—and the additional $90 million of IESIP supplementary funding provided over the last ten years—NTDE can only demonstrate marginal achievement in some outcomes by Indigenous students in our schools.

The IESIP programs are being separately reviewed by an NTDE evaluation team and so are not dealt with extensively here other than by way of description. The review does note, however, the concerns put to us that IESIP funds are used within NTDE as substitute funds for activities that should in fact be core business. Further, that little data is available on the learning outcomes that have been achieved by Indigenous students for what has been an additional $90 million outlay over the past nine years. Representations were made to the review giving extreme examples of where IESIP funds were being used for non-program activities such as equipping central office kitchenettes. The review takes the position that all NTDE funds should be distributed equitably on the basis of need, with additional Commonwealth funds used to enhance strategic efforts to remove gaps in educational outcomes, and not to displace NTDE expenditure on what should be core business. It is our strong recommendation that the NTDE IESIP evaluation team critically examines and reports on this issue, and that of unrelated expenditures, with a view to reorienting IESIP activity in line with the recommendations of this report for 1999 and beyond.

The NTDE IESIP review is examining the current processes for identifying performance targets against the thirty-two IESIP programs and reporting against them. **In the past, the evaluation processes in place tended toward activity reporting, identifying the inputs and processes being used, but not the outcomes being achieved.**



Representations from the Commonwealth to this review expressed dissatisfaction with the degree of cooperation and the quality of the NTDE data available to report against IESIP targets in the past but also noted positively the NTDE-initiated review of IESIP programs. Conversely, officers within NTDE complained that the requirement to biannually report on over seventy targets to DETYA was both time-consuming and unnecessarily onerous. In many cases, the NTDE had only agreed to 1% increases in some target areas. The review considers that the lack of stretch in the target areas inhibited rather than facilitated progress and recommends that DETYA and NTDE renegotiate the strategies and reporting requirements for IESIP in line with meeting the key recommendations of this review.

Historical relationship

The Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) raised concerns with the review about what they described as a thirteen-year-old dysfunctional relationship between themselves and the NT Department of Education, which has only recently begun to transform under new NTDE management. DETYA 's concern principally related to difficulties in accessing information on achieved outcomes. It is essential for the NTDE to have an open, cooperative and constructive relationship with DETYA which remains a significant funder and strategic partner in Indigenous education.

An example of the deteriorating relationship and communication difficulties between the department and the Commonwealth culminated with the department only accessing $196 000 from the Commonwealth's Strategic Results Project (SRP) monies, which is part of IESIP. As a senior Commonwealth officer said to the review: ' It was a real missed opportunity, a real shame. It [SRP money] could have been put to anything: preschool education, or establishing better pathways from school to work; or creating links between the home and school; improving literacy; for IT – you name it. But the Territory didn't put in—only two projects got up, and that was after repeated cajoling from us'.

The review considers the failure to access significant, available Indigenous education resources from the Commonwealth, despite having by far the greatest Indigenous student population proportion in Australia, to be an inexcusable management oversight.

Out of $38 million available for strategic initiatives, the NTDE accessed only $196 000. On a per capita basis alone, the Northern Territory as a whole should have been eligible for at least $5 million.

One independent school provider, Yirara College in Alice Springs, accessed $278 400 to provide a range of curriculum and administrative initiatives to improve grade progression at their institution. This was achieved by Yirara successfully meeting the objective of the SRP which is 'to challenge education providers across government and non-government pre-school [sic], school and VET sectors to demonstrate that improving Indigenous student learning **can occur in a short period of time through concerted efforts** '. In other words, the SRP money was about having a go and taking considered risks, in order to get some breakthroughs in Indigenous education.

> The NT missed a critical opportunity to access funding to implement a comprehensive tracking system that would undoubtedly have increased the effectiveness of educational efforts aimed at Indigenous students in NT schools.

The University of Canberra provides a further example of a project that was deemed innovative best practice by the Commonwealth and which accessed significant SRP monies. The project topic is 'Scaffolding Reading and Writing for Indigenous Children in School' and targets both urban and remote sites. There are 110 students involved in an accelerated literacy learning program. The project also trains a cohort of teachers, Aboriginal and Islander education workers (AIEWs) and tutors to deliver and promote the learning strategies. It is producing significant literacy improvements for the children who are participating and is being trialled in a number of schools, including Yipirinya in Alice Springs.

The Education Department of Western Australia successfully capitalised on the IESIP SRP funding by attracting a $1.23m package to fund three projects in the 1998/99 financial year. Of this package $380 000 funded the development of a tracking system for mobile students across all WA education facilities, a system which is vitally needed in the Northern Territory. The review has serious concerns about the limited ability to track Indigenous students and their participation, attendance and performance in the Northern Territory education system.

The Commonwealth has introduced the English as a Second Language for Indigenous-Language-Speaking Student's Program (ESL ILSS) under IESIP to assist Indigenous students entering school to gain competence in English. This is particularly important in the Northern Territory where a large number of students have little or no direct experience in using English to communicate by the time they enter primary school. The review strongly supports the ESL ILSS program and the outstandingly successful work that it is doing across schools in the Northern Territory, **for those students regularly attending the classes**. The review is recommending that the program be extended across all of the primary years of school.

The Commonwealth has begun a review of the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance Program to more sharply target the achievement of literacy and numeracy performance benchmarks and to increase student attendance levels. Of particular relevance to the review however, is the announcement that the Commonwealth will release a national Indigenous English literacy, numeracy and attendance strategy as the next critical step in the reform process toward the goal of more equitable educational outcomes. The Commonwealth has advised that the strategy will extend across school systems and support the expansion of what has already been shown to make a real difference in the classroom. The strategy will work with education providers who put resources into the approaches and delivery practices that work, and who are willing to change their operations to support success.

The review has had the opportunity to meet with the Federal Minister for Education Dr David Kemp on the soon to be announced strategy. The review strongly endorses a fundamental principle contained in the strategy to direct more support towards building stronger partnerships between parents and families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their communities and the schools that service them.

On-costs for Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program

As a result of a longstanding agreement between the Northern Territory Government and the Commonwealth Government, the Northern Territory levies IESIP funds used for salaries at a rate of 46.1% for 'on-costs'.

This is calculated as follows

Superannuation	15.6%
Workers compensation insurance	2.0%
Long service leave contribution	2.5%
Property management	14.0%
Administration	12.0%

Other jurisdictions also levy on-costs out of IESIP but at significantly lower rates and only for superannuation, workers compensation insurance, and payroll tax. On-costs in other states range from 4% to 18.6%. The review has found that this is the only special purpose grant category that is levied at such a high rate and the only jurisdiction to levy on-costs for property management and administration.

The Northern Territory Treasury has advised that they are continuing to levy on-costs at the rate of 46.1% as per the original agreement. Treasury advises they will consider any proposal put forward by NTDE to reduce the on-costs component of employing staff through IESIP initiatives.

The review understands that the Department of Education has not made a formal submission to Treasury to vary the on-cost component although such variations have been pursued for other Commonwealth-funded education initiatives. It is recommended that, as a matter of urgency, a submission be made to Treasury to reduce the on-cost component of the IESIP salary allocations and to direct the savings into targeted programs for Indigenous education in schools.

Abstudy

During the case study consultation phase many schools strongly suggested the need to examine Abstudy eligibility criteria as they claimed Indigenous students need to attend school for only one day to receive payments. Schools provided a copy of an ambiguously worded Centrelink letter which had been understandably misinterpreted by many teachers and parents and has fed widespread cynicism about the genuineness of government commitment to Indigenous education improvements.

The review undertook detailed research into this issue and discovered that the requirement not to report Indigenous student absences applied exclusively to School Term Allowances. This allowance helps with miscellaneous expenses such as books, uniforms and other school costs and is paid to parents/guardians/carers in instalments at the beginning of each term.

The criteria to receive more significant Abstudy payments does require a student to be enrolled and regularly attending an educational institution of their choice. Centrelink contacts schools to ensure students are attending nominated courses, otherwise Abstudy is ceased.

In view of the widespread confusion about Abstudy, it is recommended that NTDE work with DETYA and Centrelink to clarify the nature of the program.

Recommendations – Commonwealth–Territory roles and relationships

Commonwealth IESIP program

It is recommended that

26 the NTDE Indigenous Education Strategies Initiatives Program (IESIP) Review team clarify which IESIP funds are being used as substitute funding

27 future allocations under IESIP or equivalent funding programs are used as top-up to address the huge gap in outcomes after NTDE funds have been distributed fairly on **a per capita basis and weighted for needs**

28 the current system of thirty-two managers for IESIP programs be immediately discontinued and replaced with coordination of the NTDE IESIP program being the responsibility of the Aboriginal Education Branch

29 IESIP initiatives clearly demonstrate their contribution to the enhancement of educational outcomes for Indigenous students

30 the revised IESIP programs have a clear focus on attendance, English oracy, literacy and numeracy

On-costs for IESIP

It is recommended that

31 as a matter of urgency, a submission to Treasury is made to reduce the on-cost component of employing people under the IESIP

32 the savings are directed into targeted programs for Indigenous education in schools

33 NTDE and Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) renegotiate the strategies and reporting requirements for IESIP in line with meeting the key recommendations of this review

Abstudy

It is recommended that

34 NTDE work with DETYA and Centrelink to clarify the nature of the Abstudy Program.

Tracking costs

In their submission, the Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory presented a summary of the cost implications of Indigenous education service provision for urban schools—including secondary boarding colleges—as follows.

Factor	Cost implications
Geographic dispersion (particularly boarders)	• Administrative costs of arranging student travel • Travel and administrative costs of visiting home communities • Communication costs
Language and cultural differences	• Cost of additional staff and courses in Aboriginal languages • Specific course development or modification • Accreditation of alternative curriculum • Additional teaching resources, both personnel and materials • Additional professional development • Homework supervision • Additional supervision outside the school • Additional resources required in communicating with families • Staff involvement in matters outside the school to assist students and families
Age differences	• Development and modification of curriculum • Adjustments to activity programs and supervision • Professional development of teaching and other staff • In-school adjustments to cultural requirements
Poor health	• Higher level of health care provision within school • Supervision of students visiting health services • Increased home liaison activity • Increased health-related professional development and training
High mobility	• Cost of multiple enrolment processes • Additional costs of home liaison • Frequent administrative interaction with other schools • Record keeping
Poor attendance	• Additional pastoral care • Additional costs of home liaison • Additional teacher preparation, programming, assessment and recording of results
Low income families	• Limited capacity to raise funds from non-government sources • School provision of resources and personal items usually provided by families

The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) submitted information drawn from commissioned research on the additional recurrent costs that arise in Indigenous education for their sector, mixed-mode tertiary education. They suggest that the costs arising from the remoteness and specialised needs of their students would be the same for primary and secondary-age students in remote areas, even though the particular cost-mix may differ. Remoteness costs arise in both personnel and operational areas, e.g. through special subsidies, allowances and rebates; or through the increased costs of vehicle use, air travel and freight. Added to the costs incurred from student characteristics, e.g. poor health, disabilities, ESL requirements, the college has calculated that the delivery of Indigenous education requires 63% more than what would be required in a base budget aimed at a hypothetical group of mainstream students.

Discussion

It is clear that the costs associated with delivering services to Indigenous students are considerably higher than those associated with delivering services to non-Indigenous students. **It is thus a serious concern that departmental systems are unable to accurately estimate the cost differential**. Indeed, in the course of this inquiry, the review was unable to retrieve accurate data on such key high cost areas as staff turnover and replacement at a system-wide level. Some material is available on the cost of relief staffing. An estimate of the relief staff expenses at Maningrida reveals that just over $90 000 has been accrued in the first half of this year alone. More broadly, 1998/99 relief staff expenditure across the board totaled $1 115 673.

Table 13: Relief teacher expenditure 98/99

Operations North		Operations South	
Area	**$ Cost**	**Area**	**$ Cost**
Urban Schools	406 394	Urban Schools	160 822
Katherine Disaster	19 592	Remote Schools	77 500
Remote Schools	155 360	School of the Air	13 308
Secondary Schools	126 657	Comprehensive Secondary	25 093
Open Learning	8 644	Junior Secondary	56 402
Student Services	38 306	Senior Secondary	27 595
Total	**754 953**	**Total**	**360 720**

Total for both regions: $1 115 673

Despite there being clear areas of cost haemorrhage, there is no record or assessment/analysis of these problem areas and no evidence of reporting systems whereby managers can be expected and required to take all efforts to improve performance in the identified problem areas.

In a period of generally increasing resource restraint in public expenditure, and in an environment where the demand for services exceeds government capacities to supply, the allocation of finite resources requires managers to spend wisely.

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To do this, managers need

- accurate and relevant understandings of their financial and human resource costs
- systems which enable them to know the level of their resources and what they have to achieve.

Measuring disadvantage

The research conducted by Dr Dennis Griffith and his formulation of the Griffith Service Access Frame (GSAF) has been cited in a recent publication of the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, *Needs-Based Resource Allocation in Education – via Formula Funding of Schools* (Ross & Levacic 1999).

The notion of 'needs-based formula funding' employed in this edition refers to the impartial application of an agreed set of explicit rules to allocate educational resources in a manner which ensures that schools receive what they need in order to deliver a pre-specified quality of education. This publication is highly regarded internationally as a resource for policy makers in education and advocates an approach which is strongly endorsed by the review as being appropriate for resourcing an outcomes-based delivery of Indigenous education.

From a section of the book dealing with the additional costs involved in isolation:

> The location of a school can have major implications for the costs of running a school. An isolated school will need to bear extra costs related to the transportation of equipment and teaching materials and extra expenses will be incurred whenever the school programme [sic] requires that students should have access to facilities such as museums, theatres, libraries, etc. Such schools may be forced to accept the extra travel costs associated with obtaining services through occasional visits by specialist teachers and non-teaching staff. In addition, extra costs may arise because the costs of repairs and materials may be higher due to transport costs and also because there are additional communication costs if almost all telephone calls are at long distance rates. In Australia where isolation clearly has a major impact upon educational opportunities, considerable effort has been put in to defining a range of measures that attempt to estimate the supplementary educational costs of isolation. ... The most comprehensive attempt to date in this area has been the extremely innovative research conducted by Griffith (1997), which has aimed to provide a validated cost scale that can be applied to Australian schools according to the degree of isolation.

The review has identified requirements for additional expenditure to meet the needs of remote area and urban-based Indigenous children in the NT. Given this, it is vital that NTDE is highly competent in, and conscious of, the management of its current allocations and expenditures, so that resources can be properly managed and savings redirected.

In a separate paper, Griffith argues that much of the Commonwealth funding which targets Indigenous people is determined by the size of the Indigenous population, relying solely on census data (Griffith, 1999). In addition to the enumeration difficulties associated with census data outlined under 'Data deficiences', a recent phenomena of census counts is rapidly accelerating Indigenous population growth. The 1996 census data shows a 33% Indigenous population growth, of which half cannot be accounted for by natural increase. According to Griffith et al, ' the polities showing the highest growth were the ACT (82%), Tasmania (56%) and New South Wales (45%), while the Northern Territory (16%) had the lowest growth' (ibid: 1). In this, the Northern Territory is the only State showing normal growth patterns over the last ten years. The growth rates in other States arises as intermarriage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians exponentially increases the number of Australians able to affirm they are of 'Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin' in response to the census prompt.

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From Griffith's perspective, the funding category 'Indigenous' papers over a wide range of disadvantages that non-isolated Indigenous people do not necessarily share. In the face of a rapidly expanding Indigenous category competing for national funding, the danger is that key differences between Indigenous groups are masked over, a point of especial concern in relation to ensuring equity and access in the Northern Territory.

The review shares Griffith's concern that common funding for all Indigenous Australians ignores the vastly differing levels of need, employment opportunities and service provision costs which apply across Indigenous Australia. The funding needs of an Indigenous student in a major urban centre may be very different from those in remote areas of the Northern Territory. It is critical that adequate measures of the specific costs of Indigenous education delivery in remote NT locations are used in all negotiations with the Commonwealth to ensure that levels of access disadvantage are considered in national funding allocations.

Funding for Indigenous education programs is progressively moving to a nationally consistent, outcomes-based regime. The review supports a strongly outcomes-based approach, focused on improvements or positive trends, provided that the measures used are credible and well understood by all involved. **Indeed, to take any other approach is a betrayal of Indigenous students and their families**. A measure such as the GSAF should be used in future to analyse outcomes as the base data grows, as statistical tools for outcomes become more sophisticated, and as data imperfections are progressively removed. The review has established that NTDE has little reliable evidence on the costs involved in properly resourcing Indigenous education. The GSAF is a helpful tool in negotiating levels of funding to provide equity in access to education and other critically linked services such as health, and in fairly evaluating outcomes.

Recommendations – Funding and costs

Tracking costs

It is recommended that

35 NTDE institutes financial management systems and processes to allow accurate measurement of the resource inputs and requirements at a region, school, subject, program and ultimately student level.

36 branch directors, principals and all senior managers are trained to be competent in comprehending, analysing and acting upon such financial management and resource information.

37 NTDE senior management review regular management reports on staff turnover, relief provision, and other areas of resource loss and require all managers as part of their performance appraisal to commit to percentage improvements in these areas.

38 NTDE ensures that the management reporting systems that are put in place are pragmatic and driven by a benefits orientation and meet the business and information needs of managers within schools.

Measuring disadvantage

It is recommended that

39 NTDE seeks agreement from the Commonwealth to allocate funding on the basis of need, not category.

40 NTDE, as part of a whole-of-government effort, uses a measure such as the Griffith Service Access Frame (GSAF) in all negotiations with the Commonwealth.

School facilities and infrastructure

Since 1998 the Department of Housing (now Territory Housing) has progressively replaced its transportable classrooms—or what are commonly referred to as 'silver bullets'—at a cost of $2.2 million with the result that facilities are now mostly adequate in terms of generic infrastructure. However, as facilities that were constructed prior to the 1990s — approximately 80% of the existing stock—have not been designed with an appropriate level of acoustic treatment or with integrated disabled access, the particular needs of Indigenous children are not being satisfactorily met. The review also found that upgrades and replacements of the communications and facilities infrastructure—grounds, toilets, special purpose rooms, ovals etc—are not being undertaken as part of an overall strategy related to population growth or age of facility. A consequence of the devolved responsibility that principals now have in terms of putting in applications for new school buildings and for building upgrades, is that facilities in bush schools within regions can vary greatly. There does not appear to have been a system-wide plan to set minimum standards for what a rural or remote school should be like, with the result that some facilities have been left largely untouched for many years, while others are highly developed.

Education
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Repairs and maintenance

A major complaint from remote school communities regarding facilities focuses on the amount of time it takes to have small items attended to. Since 1992, responsibility for maintenance identification and action has been devolved to the school council and in smaller schools, to the regional group school principal. Each school has an urgent minor maintenance and repairs budget—up to $15 000— and the delegation to authorise expenditure up to $1000 for immediate action. A repairs and maintenance schedule — Building Assets Maintenance Schedule or 'BAMS'—is developed for schools by Transport and Works specifying what needs to be done in different periods —items to be addressed every year, every five years and so forth. Logically, items are also ranked in order of priority, but the experience of school principals is that anything not urgent and critical is simply not dealt with.

The success of a remote area school in being able to have problems fixed depends on its location, and the manager having the time, the contacts, and the wherewithal to diagnose what needs to be done and the appropriate channels to make it happen. Given these factors, combined with high turnover and, in some cases, the lack of experience of school managers and school councils, it is not surprising that the general state of repair of remote area school facilities and equipment is lower than for their urban counterparts, yet maintenance submissions are disproportionately received from urban rather than remote area schools.[1] In the words of one contributor, 'post 1992, with devolution, if schools don't ask, the system doesn't give, it is that simple'.

[1] Source: Data from Facilities Branch, NTDE

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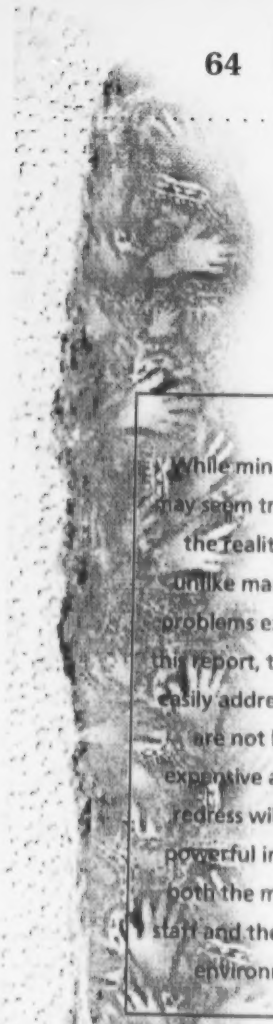

At the same time, the system for asking is excessively complicated. It requires the school principal to be able to coordinate multiple service providers, to know whether to go through Transport and Works or NTDE Facilities, to pursue negotiations through numbers of different public servants, to be prepared to zealously track what is happening, by whom, when and at what cost, and to accept that decisions may still be made without consultation. Two case study scenarios make the point.

> While minor repairs may seem trivial issues, the reality is that unlike many of the problems explored in this report, they can be easily addressed, they are not hugely expensive and quick redress will have a powerful impact on both the morale of staff and the learning environment.

School Case Study 8: Efforts by the principal to establish a cooperative partnership between the school and community has encouraged strong preschool enrolment and attendance. Lack of tiling in the preschool bathrooms allows sullage water to pool on the floor, a longstanding problem. The principal attempts to have it addressed as an urgent minor repair, knowing these are prioritised. 'It took four months of advocacy and a ministerial and even then it was only patched: the source problem was not addressed. The phone calls and the times I spend with writing or explaining just to have band-aid treatment is just ridiculous. And then the contractor just did what he wanted anyway.'

School Case Study 27: A new head teacher inherits a badly run-down remote area school facility. Fans, airconditioners, the photocopier, the lawn mower and a number of Apple computers are unusable, broken. She explained her experiences to the review: 'It all takes a lot of time. We have to go through so many channels. You think you have done all the right things, in the right way and timeframe, then to discover something else is needed, or the paperwork was lost, and you are meant to remember the detail of every single phone call, who you have spoken to, and how you were meant to access the funding. That's if the phones and faxes are working! Networking with other principals helps only to the point of confirming that others face the same issue.'

To support the current system-wide effort to heighten expectations in relation to Indigenous education, staff in Indigenous schools, including urban schools with significant Indigenous student bases, need to feel valued. The review therefore recommends that the processes for repairs and maintenance be streamlined and more focused to the needs of individual schools in line with the intent of 'Schools ... Our Focus' recognising that schools are being asked to coordinate technical issues in a highly imperfect environment.

Recommendations – Repairs and maintenance

It is recommended that

41 the processes for repairs and maintenance are streamlined, with more discretion given to the principals to have items fixed on the spot.

42 comprehensive effort is made to bring all schools to an acceptable standard with the subsequent repairs and maintenance allocation to schools calculated as a percentage of the total asset value, ensuring that this does not disadvantage poorly equipped schools.

43 the Building Assets Maintenance Schedule (BAMS) priorities for repairs and maintenance are developed in consultation with principals, are related to action plans for school improvement and closely followed by comprehensive action.

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44 In recognition that principals are not usually skilled maintenance supervisors and a centralised approach to small-scale remote locality issues is unworkable, that community-based agencies are considered as the preferred maintenance providers **where quality and cost-effectiveness can be assured**. An additional benefit of this approach is enhancement of community self-management and increased capacity to offer ongoing employment opportunities at the local level.

Parity in infrastructure

The PAC estimated that if all enrolled students attended regularly, an additional $5m would be required to meet their needs (PAC 1996: 5). This leaves aside any estimate of the impact of eligible school-age children who are not currently enrolled. It can be anticipated that if post-review interventions to increase attendance are successful, there will be a corresponding increase in the strain on and demand for facilities.

The review received compelling evidence that when a concerted effort to improve attendance succeeds, the system preparedness to match the improvement with essential resources is disjointed. A case study scenario illustrates the point.

> In 1998, a large remote area school employs a local Indigenous man with a longstanding involvement in education in the position of home liaison officer, with the specific aim of increasing attendance and participation. With the assistance and support of other staff, the incumbent throws himself into the work. Buoyed by this enthusiasm, the school enrolment for 1999 dramatically increases by an extra 200 students, placing extreme pressure on existing classroom facilities. The liaison officer continues to work with the families and teachers, following up any student who is not attending for an unspecified reason and helping with transport in the morning.
>
> The school requests provision for modifying and equipping specialised classrooms, e.g. a music and an audiovisual room, to create a more workable situation. Financial assistance is not immediately forthcoming, although the school is advised they could dedicate their own fundraising money to the task. The school refuses, arguing this will consume dollars already earmarked for books, toys, and other resources not provided by NTDE. Meanwhile, the children continue to be taught in overcrowded classrooms and behaviour problems escalate.
>
> Weeks of impasse later, the school's requests are eventually met with the wry comment 'it [student numbers] will go down in the dry', a historically accurate prediction of attendance fluctuations. True enough, the children lose their enthusiasm and attendance drops back to pre-intervention levels. By now a tad jaded, the principal tells the review, in the full presence of senior staff, 'The expectation was that the kids would disappear, so why cater for them? Let not deal with it .... if you improve attendance to where the Minister would like it to be – 95% attendance – schools would be hopelessly ill-equipped'. The principal adds that even though they have calculated that there are at least another 200 children yet to be enrolled, it is in the school's interests to run at 50% attendance because 'if they all turned up there would be a nervous breakdown of teachers in the classrooms. Teachers are stressed, kids fight. We had an actual increase of 200 kids, but we couldn't manage that'.
>
> At no time is the school congratulated for its dedicated effort to increase enrolment and attendance, 'not even a "well done!", not someone saying "that's terrific! how did you do it?"'. (Case Study 24)

It is critical that where there are indications of genuine increased need, or where the standard of amenity curtails attempts to meet current needs, that the NTG plan facilities improvements proactively and cooperatively with schools, and not reluctantly after the fact.

The reluctance of the department to rush to provide new facilities in response to what is suspected to be a short-term crisis is understandable. However, it perpetuates a predetermined outcome—attendance is kept low and local enthusiasm is quashed. School interventions are thus in danger of becoming completely self-defeating exercises, which unfortunately reinforce a widespread cynical ethos.

To their credit, Facilities staff acknowledge the difficulties associated with using census population estimates to predict fluctuations in demand, and have endeavored to source population estimates more accurately by calling upon other agency data. However, it seems there is no established system for integrating this information into a rolling program of works for rural and remote schools in alignment with other departmental initiatives. There is no evidence of Territory-wide strategic forward planning for remote schools for repairs and maintenance, upgrade or replacement, or any additional facilities.

Recommendations – Parity in infrastructure

It is recommended that

45 NTDE develops a strategic plan for infrastructure incorporating the key goals of this review. This would encompass

- school plans and community commitments to increasing attendance
- anticipating the planning recommended (under 'Access and provision') for secondary provisions and multipurpose early childhood centres
- a rolling program to ensure that over the next five years, all school facilities will be brought to an agreed standard
- disability and health needs being integrated within the designs
- that new facilities in their design encompass the goals of having education as a lifetime resource for all age groups, and are places that are welcoming to all community members.

Housing and future needs

The Northern Territory Government provides remote area housing to eligible government employees through the Housing Business Division (HBD) of Territory Housing. The accommodation entitlement for teachers who are imported to remote communities, whether from another community or from a metropolitan area, is the provision of a furnished house, which the teachers rent on a subtenancy basis. The rent is either partially or fully subsidised depending on the remoteness of the community, with rebates ranging from 25% to 100%. The rebate is paid annually in arrears.[14]

[14] Source: *Teaching in the Northern Territory: Conditions of Service Handbook*, NTDE publication, February 1999 edition.

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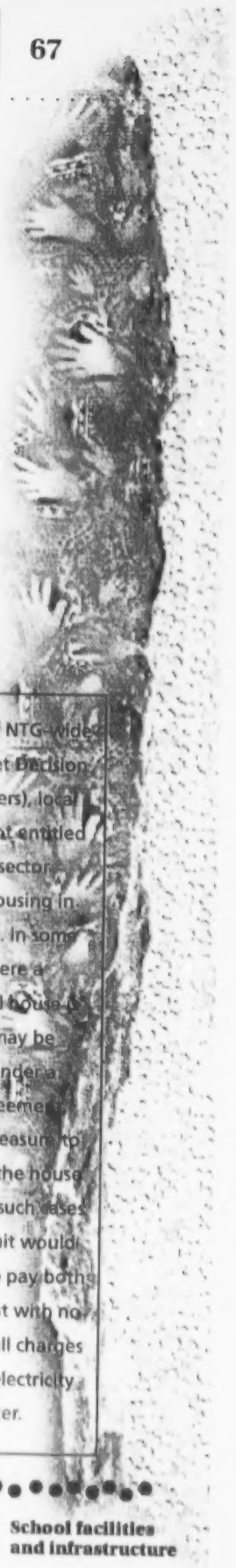

All this presumes housing availability. The review came across a small number of communities where significant housing shortages contributed to unacceptably high staff turnover and obliged community-based staff to share their accommodation with a passing parade of relief staff. The problem was at its most extreme in Maningrida, where housing shortages this year have seen more than forty relief staff trek through the school and the houses of community-based staff. [19]

Great effort has been made in recent times to systematically redress teacher housing shortages, along with housing for other public sector employees, with the injection of an additional $18.6 million out of the 1998/99 budget.

A remaining problem is the standard of amenity of existing stock which remains a significant issue in Arnhem Land where single generation houses, built to last fifteen years, are now twice that age. Efforts to modify or maintain old stock are no longer cost effective. A replacement program for this area has been identified by Territory Housing but implementation will take a number of years as the planning processes can be quite time consuming and difficult. Communities are increasingly interested in reclaiming residential land for their own use, but often the alternative sites suggested for agency housing are either difficult and expensive to service or are unattractive sites, unsuitable for professionals. These are difficult negotiation issues, which are nonetheless critical for the recruitment and retention of quality staff, who will be required as specialist support to local teachers for some time to come. As discussed in the conclusion to this report, education must become the joint responsibility of all government agencies and Indigenous organisations. This would incorporate all aspects associated with education service delivery, including housing issues.

Housing for local recruits

A number of arguments were put to the review justifying the differential provision of public sector housing in remote Indigenous communities. It is claimed that where local recruits have been put into vacant departmental housing, it is very difficult to have that person moved when a non-local teacher comes on the scene and if the condition of the house has deteriorated. It is also argued that it is the responsibility of community councils, and not the NTG, to allocate local housing, although it is acknowledged that councils may wish to allocate housing on clan and kinship allegiances which might not align with bureaucratic service provision priorities, and that given chronic levels of demand, council intentions may be irrelevant. A final oft-used argument is that, just as local recruits in urban centres have to provide their own housing, so too no distinction is made between remote area local recruits and the rest of their community. This of course begs the question of the availability of a private housing market in the communities concerned.

As a matter of NTG-wide policy (Cabinet Decision No. 2425 refers), local recruits are not entitled to public sector employee housing in remote areas. In some cases, where a departmental house is vacant, it may be provided under a tenancy agreement usually as a measure to avoid having the house vandalised. In such cases the local recruit would be expected to pay both full market rent with no rebates, and full charges for services—electricity and water.

[19] Despite public assurance that the issue was being resolved with the supply of additional duplexes in Maningrida, it appears that work is not expected to commence until September this year, making it unlikely that accommodation will be completed by the start of the next school year.

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The clear differential between teachers recruited from outside the community, who tend to be non-Indigenous, and those recruited locally, who tend to be Indigenous, is a source of deep concern for both groups. It is particularly galling for local fully trained professional teachers who are often in inadequate and overcrowded housing unsuitable for conducting any after-hours work required for lesson preparation or program planning. An Indigenous man, not a teacher but involved in the school, had this to say

> All those times we talk about education, most of the Yapa [Aboriginal] teachers go and study and work really hard yet they come back and are treated as small people. The three years I have been on the school council I've been raising pay and housing. Lots of things I've been raising and talking about. How come white teachers live in good houses? Yapa [Aboriginal] teachers get nothing. (Case Study 9)

His concerns were repeated by Indigenous people, parents and staff alike, at most of the remote area schools visited.

> Some of the buildings in remote schools need to be burnt. We need to look at conditions and resources, incentives for teachers and Indigenous staff, because they are the ones who are going to stay here. – and– [names of Indigenous teachers] they work hard every day at school and the household of three bedroom house with fifteen to twenty people in it. They can't do preparation for their teaching at home. It is physically impossible to do anything at home. I don't believe people should be given something for nothing [but] if you look at it, local people don't get the same incentives that people from outside get. They can't get the same deal. More and more, incentives are an issue for good teaching–especially for Indigenous staff to stay motivated and continue their own education. To strive to achieve... if Indigenous people do go and improve their skills, they should be guaranteed a house. (Case Study 26)

A submission from the Aboriginal Economic Development Advisory Committee stated that Aboriginal teachers needed greater encouragement and expressed the concern that 'There is some discrimination against trained teachers in areas such as the provision of housing *(Northern Territory Government Local Recruits Housing Policy)* and the allocation of assistants'. (Submission to review). Another contributor commented

> Indigenous staff in schools do not get the same conditions of service as expatriate teachers. They do not get remote allowances, housing, etc unless they choose to work away from their home community, which would destroy their special value. This makes them cheaper to employ but leads to resentment. It also makes it hard to insist on the same standards from Indigenous teachers as are expected from expatriate teachers. (Submission to review)

The situation also places great pressure on staff relationships. In a remote community classroom a new young teacher told the review

> My teaching assistant is far more effective at teaching these kids than I am. I wouldn't know what to do without her help. But I've been in this community for six months and I'm in reasonable accommodation that I share with one other teacher. My TA has lived here all her life and lives in an old wrecked house with twenty-two other people. I know it's not my fault but I feel really bad about that.

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This is a longstanding issue that needs to be addressed in the interests of rewarding, and increasing the number of, qualified Indigenous teachers in remote area schools. The review was advised that if the government were to provide remote area housing to all its community-based Indigenous employees, the cost is estimated to be in the vicinity of $80 million. Of that total, housing for qualified remote-area Indigenous teachers is estimated to cost $22 million.[1] The review considers it to be in the interests of Government to have Indigenous people rise to fill the professional positions in their own communities, which will reduce turnover in the short term, and ultimately improve community self-management processes. The review therefore recommends a combined government strategy to offer housing for local remote area appropriately qualified Indigenous professionals, including teachers, nurses, doctors and police officers.
With Commonwealth contributions, and spread over a five-year implementation period, the review considers that the provision of teacher housing for remote area local recruits is feasible.

Recommendations – Housing and future needs

Housing – general

It is recommended that

46 existing areas of chronic teacher housing shortfall are redressed as a matter of urgency.

47 remote area housing is brought to an accepted level of amenity.

Housing for local recruits

It is recommended that

48 Cabinet Decision 2454 is amended to allow the staggered introduction of teacher housing in remote areas for local recruits who have full teaching qualifications.

49 pursuant to the Northern Territory Government 's interest in Indigenous professional development and greater community level responsibility for service delivery, Cabinet Decision 2454 is considered to apply to local recruits from other agencies, especially Northern Territory Police and Territory Health Services, where those recruits have appropriate qualifications. That is, consideration should be given to supplying government housing to qualified local Indigenous police officers, nurses and doctors under negotiated arrangements with the appropriate community agencies.

50 the Government concern that such a strategy will increase the expectations of other local public sector employees in remote communities is addressed with a public information strategy which clearly explains the rationale and eligibility criteria.

51 in view of the high costs involved, negotiation with the Commonwealth is essential.

[1] This calculation is based on the number of Indigenous teachers located in remote schools but does not factor in those who are already placed in government housing because they are teaching in another community, nor those who are off-line at BIITE, upgrading their teaching qualification to a four-year degree.

Staffing

The current situation in Indigenous schools, including town schools with large numbers of Indigenous students, is that the school relies for stability on local Indigenous staff and faces a constant stream of new staff.

In the words of an experienced school principal

> A few staff, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, have had a long association with the school. For some [non-Indigenous staff] it is their first teaching appointment. They are generally inadequately prepared for living in an isolated community and working in a cross-cultural environment... and have difficulty initially with handling children and working appropriately and sensitively with Indigenous assistant teachers. Without appropriate support and professional development, these difficulties can lead to early dissatisfaction with work, low morale, accepting standards below what is required, premature departure, which all tend to have a negative affect on children who respond by not coming to school. It should be axiomatic that a cross-cultural school needs a stable and committed staff to run an effective program. Not every teacher is suited to this type of situation. (School Case Study 9)

Prior to the wider Education review of 1998 led by the current NTDE Secretary, Mr Wal Czernezkyj, a crippling situation existed whereby staffing formulas were rigidly applied based on actual attendance rather than initial enrolments, with the result that school planning became a structured exercise in self-defeat. From 1999, continuity in the start of year staffing establishment is guaranteed for the year, even if schools experience a decline in numbers, which is commended by this review as a **significant and important step forward**.[22]

Recruitment and retention

> The nub of the problem goes to recruiting. The departmental approach is to put a bum on a seat. Not everyone is suited—people need to have some sense of privilege for being here, and a sense of desire to be here for the kids. It is not a job to do for dollars alone. (School principal, Case Study 9)

The fundamental issues facing recruitment are attracting the right people in the first place and reducing the high turnover. That involves

- clarifying the criteria being sought—this should include deliberate targeting of people with an interest in teaching cross-culturally, with ESL skills or a keen ability to learn, and with sound teaching experience
- incentives to attract the right teachers in
- offering a range of inducements aimed at retaining the right teachers in place for an effective teaching period.

[22] Source: Eighth Assembly First Session 20th April 1999 Parliamentary Record No. 15.

The review received strong criticism of the NTDE remote locality incentives package. Rather than enticing the most experienced and suitably qualified to work in situations of professional challenge for a minimum of two years, the current packaging seeks to ameliorate the financial cost of living in remote areas. These criticisms are best summarised by Colin Young, who noted in his internal report to the department of 1996 that 'the present arrangements provide little by the way of incentive to teachers, but rather provide some compensation for living in geographic and culturally isolated areas'. (Young 1996: 11)

The key issue is that a compensatory system does not allow for rigorous selection tied to performance agreements, which is what is urgently needed.

The review was also told that teacher inexperience is keenly felt within Indigenous schools, and that teachers need to have a sound sense of their craft as it applies in practice within mainstream schools before they tackle the more challenging situation of Indigenous schooling. The number of first-year-out teachers in remote schools is thought to be considerable but again, it is not possible to put a figure on the incidence of first-year placements on a department-wide basis. In the case study surveys, this issue was the least well answered of all the questions. Of the twenty-seven schools which provided information—out of forty-four—eleven did not detail how long the staff had been in place. Out of the remaining sixteen schools, seven indicated at least one first year teacher on their books. Only one of these was from NTU.

School principals

Principals are the key players in managing the business of the school. The review found that the key variable determining whether school staff were clearly operating as a team with a clear sense of strategy and purpose was the school principal. As a senior education administrator told the review, 'If we want to make a difference with Indigenous education, we need to make a difference with our principals, first and foremost.'. This accords with research exploring the factors affecting literacy acquisition amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, which found that Aboriginal children achieve well in schools where the principal or head teacher is able to offer sound leadership and vision for the school as a whole. (Batten et al. 1998: 80)

School leadership is also critical to the meaningful involvement —or otherwise—of Indigenous people, either as staff or in terms of greater community representation. The principal has to manage the dynamic tension between the competing interests of non-Indigenous and Indigenous staff. Principals also manage most operational monies and grants on behalf of the school council. The principal has to balance the need to meaningfully involve the school council with the often conflicting management demands arising from government or departmental policies or procedures. In the words of one contributor

> School councils need strong direction [from the principal], as its members are likely to be ignorant of, or naive about, many matters pertaining to education, the employment of staff, and the operation of bureaucracies. Unless school councils can believe they are in control of the school, and can have influence on key aspects of their children's education, the school will be isolated from the community. (Submission to review)

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Since the early 1990s, under devolution, the department has retained centralised control of staffing matters and curriculum, which principals are expected to manage for their schools. This is in contrast to the independent schools sector where principals have total control over all of the inputs. A critical issue facing both NTDE and principals is identifying who is accountable for achieving outcomes, with each currently able to blame the other for any failures, or to conversely take credit for any successes. The measure of a successful school requires clarity about which outcomes are to be valued and measured. In terms of gaining shifts in Indigenous education, it is essential that Indigenous students are not treated as just another interest group, in competition with others for time and resources, but are seen as core to the business of the school. This might require careful selection of the principal for attitude, and most certainly requires a shift in the way Indigenous students are viewed, especially in urban areas.

Devolved school management requires high-level management skills. At present, the training of principals for their work in a remote location is done exclusively on the job, while both urban and remote area principals have identified a clear need for greater business training. Principals need to also gain an understanding of their role as members of the broader public sector—through for example, the Public Sector Management Course (PSMC) or the Executive Development Program (EDP). This would better equip them for the cross-agency and partnership activities they need to broker within their school communities. One contributor observed that school managers need to have more support in this area: 'A lot is expected of educational leaders in Indigenous schools; they need professional support that develops their skills in weak areas. Indigenous and non-Indigenous principals will have both similar and different needs'. (Submission to review)

The review was unable to find any serious system requirements for principals to deliver on student learning outcomes corresponding with the devolution of responsibility for school management. However, it must be recognised that principals do not have full control of the most critical factor to influence outcomes: the selection of staff and the allocation of capital works resources. Principals have limited control over the quality of the teachers. Too often the deployment of staff is determined by considerations other than finding the best person for the job. The review encountered the concern held by a number of principals that they can be allocated poor performance transferees, or excess departmental officers.

It was put to the review that the greater accountability of principals should go with an increased power to hire and fire. In the words of one contributor, ' If we are going to be in positions where we can really make a difference, we have to be able to construct teams of people who are like minded in terms of being there for the interests of the community'. One remote area principal interviewed during the case study process had a thought-provoking perspective on turnover. Not convinced it is the key variable it is frequently claimed to be, he argued that educational outcomes were not remarkably different between schools with long-term staff, versus schools with high staff turnover and a revolving cohort of inexperienced staff. For this principal, the key challenge was creating a team of teachers who were able to reflect on their practices and have clarity about their purpose. To this end, he would prefer to avoid getting in extra staff rather than run the risk of upsetting the team with whom he has invested so much developmental time. (Case Study 26)

This review considers the role of principals to be critical to creating learning environments for Indigenous students which are explicitly challenging and without stigma, and to fostering a team of staff which has a drive for excellence and not remediation. The ' team teaching' ethos clearly delivers the most effective teaching environment in urban and bush schools. The whole ethos of the school, led by the principal —its curriculum, its staff and its interaction with the community —needs to emphasise the value that is placed on the culture of its students.

Nowhere in the existing method of operation are principals held accountable for improving student outcomes in their school other than by their own sense of commitment. In fact, some principals feel that the system judges their success on their ability to avoid attracting negative attention to, or comments about, their schools and not on student learning outcomes, despite rhetoric to the contrary. In the words of one principal, speaking as the leader of an urban secondary school, 'If we did nothing, if the school didn't put on projects, if it did nothing different, then we would be ignored —no one would call us into account. In fact, you get more attention trying to change things. If you just paddle along, no one would mind' (Case Study 17)

This corresponds with the finding that instances of good practice and successful initiatives were locally driven, led by the principal, yet usually ignored by the wider department. The converse also appears to be true. Submissions were made in respect of bush schools that had failed to keep basic student records or implement fundamental teaching practices. Batchelor Institute in its submission, cited a number of verifiable case-study examples demonstrating this failure. They attributed it to neophyte teachers and inadequately trained principals in bush schools implementing poor teaching practices ignored by the department. The submission stated

> As the anecdotes described above indicate it is our experience that fundamental curriculum frameworks are not being adhered to or enforced and that schools full of neophyte teachers are given too much freedom in this regard.
>
> It is difficult to understand how this abrogation of fundamental professional responsibilities can have occurred when there are people employed to ensure that this is not the case. One can only assume there is simply not the degree of professional accountability within the Department of Education towards the Indigenous population of the Northern Territory that is normally expected towards the non-Indigenous population.

It is critical that NTDE identifies the skills, responsibilities and accountabilities required of principals and hold all principals responsible for improving the educational outcomes of their Indigenous students if they are to implement such review recommendations as are within their jurisdiction. By the same token, it is vital principals have the skills and the capacity to deliver. This requires

- rigorous and careful selection processes—in view of their pivotal role in leading the school, principals themselves need to be the highest calibre available—it is therefore essential that positions are advertised nationally and broadly to attract the best possible applicants
- clarity within the department on what is expected in Indigenous education

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- performance agreements which build these departmental expectations into contractual arrangements, including minimally, requirements to improve attendance, learning outcomes and relationships with the feeder community. An important aspect of that relationship is the obligation on the principal to ensure that feedback to parents of student outcomes is understandable and meaningful, having regard to the innovative techniques already being implemented in bush schools
- recognition that the principal is the senior representative of the education agency and as such needs to be a networking with other institutional representatives within the community
- building on this representative role, principals are critical to the development of effective local-level partnerships between education, housing, health, local government and local councils. Joint approaches to planning at the local level are critical. In a remote area, this should see the development of planned approaches to health and attendance, involving key community organisations and individuals, and other agency representatives, working to a locally agreed plan of action.

The review found that while the roles played by principals in urban and remote primary schools are different, the issues they are faced with managing are equally complex. The required shift of Indigenous education to core business in all schools should be reflected in an acknowledgment of the key role played by school managers in all schools, large and small. To this end, it is a recommendation of this review that the current titles of 'Head Teacher' and 'Teacher in Charge' be amended to that of 'Principal'. This nomenclature change, whilst not affecting salaries or delegations, would nonetheless reflect the high level of responsibility expected of these positions in small remote area schools and make a very clear statement that this person is the senior representative of the NTDE in that community.

Non-local teacher turnover

Teacher turnover was a recurrent theme in explanations of what is impeding achievement in Indigenous education.

> The problems of high teacher turnover for education are obvious, if one accepts the specialised nature of remote Indigenous education. At a system-wide level too, higher teacher turnover leads to a perception that remote Indigenous education is a basket case, and relatively few positive solutions are presented. (Submission to review)

> Turnover is a big issue. Take this last seven years: there been sixty teachers, of whom at least thirty were neophytes therefore we are constantly doing teacher training on the job .... Stability is a key concern. Of the people left, of the sixty that have gone through, only five are still in the NT – the majority are from interstate. (Case Study 35)

A group of Indigenous women, staff and parents, who had traveled a long distance to a community where the review was conducting a case study, specifically to share their concerns with the team, told of how in the last eighteen months, three different head teachers have come and gone from their school, ' The ATs—assistant teachers—watch them. They come, they go. We don 't have a Yapa [Aboriginal] principal yet, nothing. We need someone to be trained'.

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It is difficult to assess what the true levels of staff turnover are in the absence of reliable system-level information. The NTDE's personnel database (PIPS) does not separate Indigenous from non-Indigenous teacher information, making it impossible to verify the widespread understanding that Indigenous teachers are in place far longer than non-Indigenous teachers.

Table 14: Length of service of currently employed teaching stream employees in the NT as at September 1999.

	0–5 yrs	6–10 yrs	11–15 yrs	16–20 yrs	20+ yrs
Urban	891	308	359	261	236
Remote	436	118	67	33	29
Total	**1327**	**426**	**426**	**294**	**265**

This lack of turnover information is in contrast with the Education Department in Western Australia. In Western Australia teacher turnover is tracked on a random sample basis using transfer and appointments data, for workforce planning, policy development and human resource (HR) management issues. This last includes the identification of issues such as poor HR management by line managers resulting in job dissatisfaction and high turnover.

Despite the lack of detailed system data, there are many indications of unacceptably high non-local teacher turnover. For example, in his review of strategic issues in Aboriginal Education, Colin Young provides data collated from annual reports and NTDE personnel reports to show the teacher loss rates per annum for rural and Aboriginal schools for the period 1981–1990 averaged 23.7% (Young 1996: 34). Unfortunately, these teacher loss rates again do not discriminate between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff. Young also cites research conducted in 1985 indicating that the average period of service for non-Aboriginal teachers in Central Australian communities was six months, and in the Top End, approximately three years (ibid).

Further, in the forty-four schools surveyed by the review, there were considerable differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous average lengths of stay (ALOS), with Indigenous staff averaging 6.7 years across the Alice Springs, Darwin, East Arnhem and Katherine regions,[7] and non-Indigenous staff averaging 2.7 years.

Table 15: Average length of stay of teaching staff, including assistant teachers, in years, for review case study schools.

Region	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Alice Springs	4.9	2.7
Darwin	7.1	3.4
East Arnhem	12.7	1.8
Katherine	2.2	2.9

[7] The review was unable to get a picture of average length of stay for either Indigenous or non-Indigenous staff in Tennant Creek.

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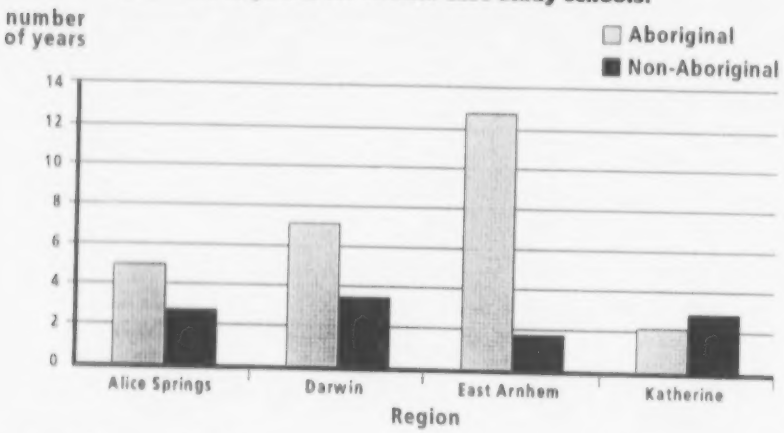
Figure 6: Average length of stay of teaching staff, including assistant teachers, in years, for review case study schools.



In small schools, rapid shifts have a larger impact. At one remote area school visited by the review, of the seven staff, all four non-local members had only been there for one term (Case Study 27). At another, all six non-local staff interviewed, with the singular exception of the head teacher, were intending to move on at the year' s end (Case Study 23). Good relief teachers are hard to find and in high demand. A frequent complaint from schools was the potluck nature of relief staff provision, ' We are catering for new kids with relief teachers. And we don't have a choice with who we can get in. Some of them we wouldn't employ in a pink fit' . (Case Study 24)

Student impact

It is clear that the costs of high staff turnover are extensive from a recruitment and induction point of view. Of even greater concern is the educational impact. Without any doubt, the short-term teacher transiting through a community gets a far richer and more rewarding educational experience for themselves than they are ever able to impart to their students. Submissions to the review claimed high teacher turnover meant the students ended up doing Year 1 over and over.

Since the review's visit, attendance at the Maningrida CEC has suffered a major slump. In response to a request from the review to provide an update on the total number of emergency relief teacher (ERT) contracts issued by the school to date this year, together with an in-depth examination of the reasons for the slump in attendance since the review visit, the principal faxed the following information, current as of 27 August 1999.

1. The total number of ERTs flown in to work at Maningrida CEC

Term 1	28
Term 2	67
Term 3 (to date)	45

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2. Enrolment and attendance

In February 1999 both enrolment and attendance increased by around 200, giving the highest figures for a decade, a change directly attributable to effective initiatives. Each month both enrolment and attendance have fallen although the percentage difference between the two has remained fairly constant. From February to August enrolment has fallen by 126 while attendance has fallen by 115. (By comparison in 1998 over the same period enrolment rose by thirty-two and attendance rose by fifteen. In 1997 enrolment fell by twenty-seven and attendance by twenty-four.)

The classes with the major losses in both enrolment and attendance are those with interruptions to staffing, with the major effects appearing in the Preschool and R classes. Where the regular teacher has returned to the class, e.g. following an illness, numbers have risen during that collection period.

In one case numbers were maintained in an early childhood class when we were able to secure an excellent ERT who returned week after week, flying home on weekends because of the accommodation shortage. When that teacher was unable to return for a few weeks the numbers in that class fell instantly. Now that she has returned the numbers are beginning to build once more.

Parents ask us who will be in a class. They also tell us when they like a teacher and want them to stay. At the moment they all adore the teacher in the Preschool (and her husband is an excellent teacher also!). What a shame we don't have a house to offer them – consequently they are leaving for WA!

Now I've found another married teaching couple– fortunately they have a yacht so I'm hoping I can get them to live aboard on the Liverpool until a house gets built. Reminds me of Australia's beginnings, hulks on the Thames .... Only this time it's teachers. Mind you, I wonder if our workers comp. covers croc attacks while travelling to and from work – wouldn't the NT News love that one?

The advice from the principal was supported by copies of the relevant Enrolment and Attendance Returns. The data demonstrates conclusively the disruptive effect on attendance of high teacher turnover at this school. It should be noted that Maningrida, a large Indigenous CEC, is the most extreme example of this particular problem which negatively impacts on education outcomes across all Indigenous schools in the Northern Territory. The covering note from the principal to the attendance data has been printed in full because it puts at least to some degree, the low-outcome statistics from bush schools into a real-life, real-time context. No parent needs to be told how disruptive to a child' s learning and enjoyment of school a passing parade of different teachers becomes. When those teachers are in addition almost entirely foreign to the cultural backgrounds and first languages of their pupils, it is not, to put it mildly, conducive to good learning outcomes. A greater degree of parental involvement and support is needed across all schools and proposals are advanced in this report to encourage this to happen. But no partnership agreement can reasonably expect to get better performance from all of the partners if the basic conditions for learning are not being met.

A member of the Indigenous staff at the school told the review:

> New teachers in the beginning don't get on with the kids and the kids will muck up. When a qualified teacher's husband passed away, there were lots of relief teachers coming and going, and the kids stayed away for a long time.

Indigenous education staffing strategy

All things point to the need for a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy aimed at improving Indigenous education across urban and remote area schools. Imaginative and creative approaches can have a dramatic impact: two approaches, one from interstate and the other developed within the NT, illustrate the potential.

Example one

Since 1996, the Education Department of Western Australian (EDWA) has put in place a Remote Teaching Service (RTS) Workplace Agreement with generous leave, cash and other incentives to reduce the high teacher turnover. Depending on the level of isolation and availability of services, e.g. shopping, banking and entertainment facilities, teachers are offered their base salary plus a remote teaching service allowance ranging from $8 500 to $11 500, bringing the salary range to between $41 000 to $75 000 per annum. Free accommodation is provided together with annual recreation flights to the nearest main centre. The staff, families and effects are flown in with full costs met by the department. Signatories are also entitled to accrue additional leave over and above the annual recreation and long service leave entitlements. The initial workplace agreement is for three years, with a possibility of extension to four years. If a teacher remains in place for the full three-year contract, the teacher is entitled to an additional ten weeks long service leave. If the teacher then extends his or her contract by a further twelve months, making it four years continuous employment, he or she is entitled to twenty-two weeks long service leave, on top of ordinary leave entitlements.

Performance management is an important component of the strategy, with each employee entering into a performance management agreement with the principal, and each principal entering into a performance management agreement with the district director. Recruitment preference is given to applicants with skills and knowledge in

- relevant school-based curriculum
- Indigenous education
- students with special needs and learning difficulties
- multigrade and small group techniques
- ESL
- literacy

Within parameters[24], RTS school employees are asked to accept flexible hours of instruction, daily attendance and school term variations designed around community preferences and best practice concerning student outcomes. Demarcations between primary and secondary specialist teachers can also be suspended if the training background and capacities of the staff are sufficient to allow such role expansion.

Prior to the agreement, in 1995, eighty permanent staff members requested and received staff transfers out of remote areas, representing a turnover of 40% of the remote staffing cohort. In the first three years of the workplace agreement, staff turnover of both permanent and temporary staff reduced by an average of 36.5%. In 1999, more than 50% of the teachers who commenced their service at the same time as the new workplace agreements were instigated, have chosen to extend their current agreement to the maximum of four years or have applied for new workplace agreements[25].

[24] Being that the total student contact is 1029 hours per annum, and there are twenty-six hours of pupil free time for employee professional development and planning.
[25] Source: EDWA 1999

The additional net costs associated with the package amount to $5.9 million per annum. The additional salary costs are $2.6 million, while the leave, rent differential—to provide free housing—and travel accounts for the other $3.3 million. For this investment, staff turnover has been significantly reduced, as the majority of teachers remain in the RTS for at least the initial tenure of three years to receive the associated benefits. It is important to also note that teacher turnover data informed the identification of WA 's difficult-to-staff school categories, with the rate of teacher turnover being one of the criteria used to determine whether or not a school meets the category of ' difficult-to-staff'. Future work includes means of making less remote schools, especially isolated rural schools, which do not meet the RTS criteria, more attractive and ensuring that the staff recruited have the right attitudes for the position and are not driven by pecuniary interest alone.

Example two

In 1996 Territory Health Services had been enduring a 360% turnover of nurses per annum in the Central Australian region with the majority of remote area nursing positions at any one time being filled with temporary replacements doing three-month locums. Recognising that former piecemeal approaches to recruitment and retention—which had included tinkering with advertisements and running marketing campaigns—were not impacting on retention rates, a more holistic approach was developed. The situation has since been completely reversed, to the point where there is now a 96% nursing retention rate, with significant improvements in the associated client service.

Changing the perception that working out bush was in effect 'doing time' and a 'dead end', together with a complete shift in the tactical approach toward selection and induction, were key to the reversal.

While it is difficult to quantify, savings have been identified in the following areas.

- Recruitment and relocation expenses savings of $30 000 in 1998/99 from 1995/96 arising out of the current retention rate of 90% compared with the historical turnover of 360% prior to the implementation of the program. This saving was achieved even while eight new community health centres opened during this period. Time savings for managers freed from recruitment activity have not been calculated.
- Workers compensation payment costs have reduced by approximately 30% to $18 000 in 1998/99 since the period prior to the Pathways program, a significant reduction when it is considered that the number of nursing staff has actually increased. Savings associated with not having to backfill the vacated positions of staff on workers compensation related leave are not able to be quantified. Industrial relations issues and associated costs have also remained static over the period of the program—again, a significant achievement when the nursing force has increased significantly and a likely saving.
- Expenses associated with locum services in 1995/96 were $337 350. In 1998/99, this dropped to $257 000 even though service provision increased during this period with the opening of the eight new community health centres.

The review considered that for the THS success to be repeated in NTDE, a complete overhaul of current staffing approaches is required. Comprehensive strategies covering every aspect of recruitment and retention must be developed, including NTDE recruitment advertisements, which currently do not even mention Indigenous people, in contrast to THS advertisements for nurses which seek out ' exceptional people' to work in communities.

Recommendations – Recruitment and retention

Principals

It is recommended that

52 a comprehensive professional development program for principals is developed, and implemented, providing business management and public sector leadership training and addressing the separate needs of Indigenous principals and senior school staff.

53 in conjunction with the Self-Managing Schools Program, principals be given control of notional staffing budgets by devolving funding to school councils to allow greater recruitment flexibility and community control.

54 principal positions are advertised nationally to attract the widest field possible.

55 a program is embarked on by NTDE to articulate to school principals the strategy of moving Indigenous education to core business and to ensure this shift is actioned within schools.

56 NTDE develops performance agreements with principals which build these departmental expectations into contractual arrangements, including minimally, requirements to improve Indigenous student attendance, learning outcomes and relationships with the community.

57 the titles 'Head Teacher' and 'Teacher in Charge' be changed to 'Principal'.

Indigenous education staffing strategy

It is recommended that

58 NTDE notes the successes within the Education Department of Western Australia and Territory Health Services in significantly reducing staff turnover, and learns from these and other such initiatives to establish a comprehensive recruitment and employment strategy which enables rigorous recruitment tied to performance outcomes.

59 in the first instance the NTDE engages professional recruitment consultants to establish the recruitment criteria and processes required, and to assist with the design and development of the overall strategy.

60 care is taken to avoid creating new categories of high staff turnover schools in regional areas not within defined categories of remoteness in determinations of hard-to-staff schools developed under the total recruitment strategy.

Preparation and training

Nationwide, the mean age of teachers is forty-six years. The implication is that **the bulk of the teaching service is already in place**. In this context, 'teacher renewal' in the form of ongoing professional development is critical within a service industry facing national shortages.

The following description from an ESL professional—various versions of which were constantly reiterated—could apply equally as well to urban as well as 'bush' contexts described.

> Both experienced and neophyte teachers are appointed to Indigenous community schools ... On arrival at a new school teachers use the teaching strategies and approaches to schooling that have worked for them in the past in the new context. The majority find these strategies and approaches are not effective with Indigenous students ... Many of these teachers suffer a crisis of confidence after only a short time in the bush. Some of these reflect on their practice, seek support, undertake study and professional reading and as a result develop further strategies and approaches which are more appropriate and stay on to be highly effective teachers. Some give up and leave after a short time. Some stay on and take the line of least resistance, that is, do 'busy work'—colouring in, circling all the *a*s in a text, cutting out pictures from magazines, filling in worksheets. This keeps students entertained but not learning much. (Submission to review)

One contributor to the review described the essential criteria for remote area teaching in the following way.

> The remote area expatriate professional has to be able to:
>
> - carry out their work with minimal resources and limited peer contact
> - act as a mentor for Indigenous co-workers, especially assistant teachers, and be prepared to offer them some support outside the workplace
> - learn to understand the culture and history of the community, and what aspects of the prevailing realities should or should not, can and cannot be changed, and what rate of change is realistic
> - make informed judgements about what demands and what work and social behaviours from Indigenous co-workers, e.g. assistant teachers are acceptable and which are in contravention of the community's own rules and mores
> - make judgments in terms of this understanding, but none the less keep high standards and expectations
> - deal with urgent social and health problems which are not otherwise being met, and lobby for appropriate services to be put in place by the relevant authorities—which may be anything from the local council to some federal agency
> - stay optimistic in the face of failures.
>
> (Submission to review)

The review received strong and consistent messages from non-local teachers emphasising the crucial value that they placed on their teaching partnerships with local Indigenous teachers. The messages were just as strongly reinforced vice-versa from local Indigenous teachers. The 'team teaching' ethos clearly delivers the most effective teaching.

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environment in bush schools. Where the 'team' can remain in the same classroom for the whole school year there is equally clear evidence of a positive effect on attendance in those classes compared with other classes in the same school.

New teachers also repeated the concern —by no means confined to bilingual schools— that they were unable to even program effectively for the classroom situations they found themselves in. As one neophyte teacher with otherwise excellent academic qualifications told the review, 'I'm in my second term now and I still don't know how to even program a lesson for these kids. Nothing I did in my training prepared me for this. If it wasn't for the help I'm getting from the Indigenous staff, I wouldn't know what I was doing'.

The long-term strategy in remote schools is to increase community control with more local staff supported by non-local teachers. In the short to medium term a significant number of non-local teachers will remain an important part of the teaching force. It is essential that teaching staff are prepared as thoroughly as possible for their role and carefully selected for attitude and ability. This needs to be addressed on a number of fronts: at the site of teacher training —the tertiary sector; at the time of induction to the department and upon arrival at the school; and as part of ongoing professional renewal. These are discussed in turn.

Tertiary preparation

It did not appear that there are any formal agreements between NTDE and universities to prepare and provide properly trained graduates to work in Indigenous schools. It is critical that NTDE exercise its power as a purchaser of services from tertiary institutions such as the Northern Territory University and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education to specify the skills set required by government for its schools. More broadly, every opportunity to influence training agendas at a national level should be exploited, including explorations of the possibility of cross-sector training development with jurisdictions facing similar teaching challenges.

Cross-cultural training and orientation

While the majority of schools visited identified cross-cultural preparation and orientation as essential requirements for their work, the department's inhouse program were universally criticised. The consistent advice from teaching staff is that they provide little by way of preparation for the community of residence or relationship-building with the Indigenous people they will be working with. This sentiment held true whether the teacher was going to an urban or remote area, was a local recruit or was new to the Territory.

An Indigenous teacher in the Katherine region who had undertaken the inhouse program told the review

> They didn't talk about anything Indigenous, the real problems, the real things you face going out to communities. Like they would talk to you about how you might get 'jock rot', on health stuff, but they need to prepare them (the teachers) to teach big classes, ESL, hearing, how they can deal with it ... It should help them know how to do their job. (Case Study 31)

Collective staff comments from an urban school in the southern region covered the following ground

> We didn't get anything about culture ... it needs to be renamed... people need to have a clear understanding...the course was too personalised... everybody was disappointed ... we thought it would provide us with some strategies for teaching Indigenous students and give us some local knowledge, but it didn't happen. (Case Study 3)

Conversely, community members expressed their frustration at being left out: ' Why should those people in town talk about our business? We should be telling the new teachers what we want them to know!'. A similar finding is noted by Colin Young in his discussion paper on strategic issues in Aboriginal education. Young found that

> There is no concerted effort to prepare teachers for living and working in communities. Teachers who receive community postings and who attend the initial induction course report that it passes in a whirl of paper, information and people, and that while the mechanics of being an employee of the Public Sector may be attended to, it is of little assistance in preparing for living and working in an Aboriginal community. (Young 1996: 20)

Attempts to take the cross-cultural courses into schools have met with uneven success. During a case study visit to an urban secondary school with a large Indigenous student base, a first-year-out science teacher with no previous exposure to Indigenous students with poor literacy and numeracy skills told the review that she had not received any cross-cultural training since being with the department. Overhearing this, the assistant principal reminded the teacher that she had been relieving for another staff member on the day that they had had an in-school course and so had missed out altogether – 'But you didn't miss much' (Case Study 40). Another remote area head teacher, in place for over a year, admitted she had received no training at all

> From the day I started in the Territory there has been nothing—no induction, nothing on what to expect, what to do, [it] just sink or swim. The department tries to help (by answering phone calls) but there is overwhelming demand and the people who are meant to help are just as much in awe as you are. They are inexperienced themselves. (Case Study 27)

The review acknowledges the difficulties associated with attempting to offer comprehensive induction and cross-cultural training within extreme time constraints but considers the needs are so acute that a comprehensive review of existing approaches is essential. Revised programs need to be

- accessed by all staff within the organisation
- pragmatic and based on the notion of conferring cultural effectiveness, i.e. not sentimental and unrealistic
- organised as much as possible on site within communities with specific purpose allocations giving the principal the discretion to be able to employ suitable local people—on the basis of sentiments from many respondents that a single full day with two or three local Indigenous people in a community, moving over country and talking about relationships and local issues, would be worth a week in Darwin

- complementing local input, local school handbooks, such as that produced on the Tiwi Islands *Toward an Understanding of the Tiwi Language/Culture Context: a Handbook for Non-Tiwi Teachers* (Ward 1993) giving meaningful and relevant information on the school and community. This is a possible role for literature production centres.
- offered at or close to the commencement of the school year, with time and resource requirements to be negotiated between schools and the department.

Within the urban centres of Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs, the opportunity exists to contract Indigenous organisations and/or organisations with a proven track record in cross-cultural training for public sector organisations, such as the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD), Julalikari Council, and the Aboriginal Resource and Development Services (ARDS).

Good practice: Orienting staff at Murrupurtiyanuwu School

The literature production centre at this school has produced an excellent resource book to introduce new staff and others to the Tiwi Islands and their people, *Towards an Understanding of the Tiwi Language/ Culture Context – a Handbook for Non-Tiwi Teachers.* The book is given to staff at recruitment, provides them with 'cross-cultural education' directly relevant to the community, and is then the basis for informed questions to local people after they arrive. A common complaint from many new teachers to the review related to their perceptions of inadequacies in cross-cultural induction. The review believes that a combination of an appropriate information book, provided in advance, combined with sessions with local people employed by the school, would be a far richer and more useful experience than any number of programs outside the community.

Ongoing professional renewal

The review considers teacher training to be a significant part of a total strategy for Indigenous education yet once again found no evidence of a strategic plan for staff development related to the requirements for improving Indigenous education. There is a strong culture of professional development and inservicing within NTDE which seems to confuse the aims of personal development with what people need in order to do their jobs effectively. Training is not simply to increase a person's list of qualifications—however, where people are under-qualified for their task, for example, in lacking ESL skills, a noted deficit for Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff alike, then every effort needs to be made to increase the pool of available skills. Additionally, senior teachers need training for the management tasks they are increasingly called on to perform within schools. Literacy education and skills in working across cultural paradigms are also required.

ESL training

It was beyond scope of the review to examine ESL teacher credentialling efforts in professional development and teacher training programs. However, several relevant concerns emerged concerning available ESL training.

- It is not usually available at the undergraduate level but is usually taken as a post-graduate qualification.
- Such undergraduate ESL or Indigenous education modules that exist tend not to be compulsory units but elective.
- ESL methodologies are designed to meet the needs of migrant students in metropolitan areas and not Indigenous students.
- As teachers will confront the bulk of their Indigenous ESL challenges on the ground, ESL expertise is needed at the local level.

In the main, it would appear that ESL preparation at universities is limited.

What is still missing is the system-level planning and strategic analysis aimed at ensuring that every teacher recruited and every teacher already in place has some component of professional development in ESL within a short time of commencing work. This requires a critical analysis, as part of the Indigenous Education Recruitment and Retention Strategy, of

- how many staff currently employed by NTDE have no ESL qualifications, and the plans for ensuring they are covered within a minimum period of two years
- how many have limited or obsolete training, and the plans for updating their skills
- how many are in place with excellent skills and practices who should be recognised for their exemplary practice and used to tutor others.

ESL skills are an important requirement for effective education in most, if not all, Indigenous schools. The NTDE has negotiated the availability of a two-year part-time postgraduate Certificate in Indigenous ESL teaching, which has just commenced with twelve intakes in the first semester of 1999. As the service purchaser, the NTDE should also negotiate with the tertiary sector to increase the scope and adequacy of ESL training for trainee teachers at the undergraduate level.

However, graduate teachers who are recruited into the NT require immediate ESL methodologies so they can quickly become effective in Indigenous classrooms. The review received evidence that for teachers new to the bush, interaction with other experienced teachers is currently the only immediate avenue for learning how to operate in the multilanguage cross-cultural environment they find themselves in. This interaction is often made difficult given the workloads and pressures of remote area teaching. NTDE needs to provide intensive short-course training in ESL, at either the time of induction or close to it. This training need not be provided in-house but could be accessed from the private sector or sponsored if the market does not already exist. This would provide the skills that many teachers told the review they desperately need and would supplement the two-year postgraduate certificate recently introduced at NTU. Training in working with hearing impaired children is also critical.

Good practice: Staff input – Learning together sessions, Gunbalunya

At Gunbalunya CEC, weekly learning together sessions are conducted to draw out the beliefs and conceptions that structures teachers' work and explore how these intersect with what we need to do to improve outcomes. The sessions have dramatically impacted on the active involvement of Indigenous staff in wider school meetings and classroom planning sessions, which are to be distinguished from these more reflective learning sessions. Areas of conflict that might not otherwise get articulated have a space for discussion and release —such as the Indigenous staff's exasperation with the non-Indigenous preoccupation with community 'problems', and the Balanda staff's frustration with the impact of substance abuse and seeming community indifference on their work. The principal who introduced the Learning Together concept to the school at times also sets academic reading for the group to explore. At first he was advised by concerned Balanda staff that Indigenous staff would find the language too difficult, and that the act of setting the articles was inherently exclusionary. The principal persisted, as did the Indigenous staff, who independently told members of the review that while they had to work hard at understanding the concepts, as did all readers, when they 'cracked it', it was revelatory. They felt they were accessing the secret knowledge otherwise kept from them yet accessed by non-Indigenous teachers. The Indigenous teachers would take the material and concepts to members of their family and community and return with their observations and wider feedback. The principal explained his thinking to the review 'Unwittingly perhaps, making things "culturally relevant" for some means stripping intellectual content rather than making our values explicit. This intellectual censorship stifles discussion about values that are central to our notions of ourselves as people and teachers'. It was clear to the review that the sessions also send a clear message about teaching partnerships and valuing that is a powerful induction tool for new and old staff alike.

Recommendations – Preparation and training

Tertiary preparation

It is recommended that

61 NTDE exercises its power as a purchaser of services from tertiary institutions to specify the skills set required by the department for its schools and negotiate service-level agreements with Northern Territory University (NTU), the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) or other providers to meet the professional development and training needs of its staff.

62 NTDE negotiates with the tertiary sector to increase the scope and adequacy of ESL training at the undergraduate level.

Orientation and cross-cultural effectiveness training

It is recommended that

63 NTDE orientation and cross-cultural training programs be reviewed urgently with a view to increasing the local area content and applicability of the information acquired, and to take account of relevant cross-departmental work and interstate initiatives.

64 schools/clusters are allocated discretionary funds enabling employment of suitable local people to provide cross-cultural community induction.

65 the option of outsourcing urban area cross-cultural training is investigated and that suitable training providers with an established track record be engaged to fulfil the mandated Northern Territory Public Service (NTPS) requirements to provide effective cross-cultural preparation.

Ongoing professional renewal

It is recommended that

66 NTDE implements a strategic plan for staff development related to the requirements for improving Indigenous education across the board.

67 NTDE develops and implements a strategy to achieve universal coverage in ESL methodologies for all teachers across all schooling types—early childhood through to secondary—within a period of five years.

68 in the initial period, the department should precisely specify its particular ESL training requirements and establish a clear plan analysing the workforce and the current levels of training, specifying the different groups that need different levels of input, and determining how and when the gaps will be filled against performance targets.

69 NTDE develops options for providing intensive short course training in ESL.

Good practice: Ludmilla Primary School

This urban Darwin school has a close relationship with the nearby Bagot community. A majority of its students are Indigenous children. The school runs an ASSPA breakfast program for students that need it – 'We handle any grooming problems at the same time - it's a great social time and good for reinforcing manners'. The school has an active and committed AIEW—it is clear she needs more help—and considers AIEWs and AROs to be 'an essential resource'. All of the school staff, including administrative and support staff, led by the principal, instituted an improvement plan for the school. As a team, the staff made a detailed examination of everything that happened at the school. Things that were seen to be working were kept, things that weren't were either changed or removed, and some new ideas were generated to be tried. One new idea was to restructure the school's teaching program to provide for two set periods each day, concentrating on literacy and numeracy. During those periods students are 'streamed' and teaching resources are allocated in the most appropriate manner. The principal emphasised that 'time on task' was critical and that 'every spare minute of time on task should be spent improving English and numeracy'. It was clear that because the staff as a team had 'ownership' of 'Keep, Change and Try' they were all committed to implement its outcomes. The school is actively involved with the Ludmilla Landcare Group and has won several awards which were used to bolster the school's $ for $ funding.

Indigenous recruits

It was of concern to the review to discover that while NTDE lays claim to being the largest employer of professionally trained Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory (cf. Parliamentary Record No 15, 20 April 1999), no policy on what is commonly referred to as 'Aboriginalisation' exists. Indigenous staff during review consultations drew attention to this absence when the issue of Indigenous/non-Indigenous teacher conditions was discussed

> There should be conditions for local recruits that are the same as those recruited outside. What are we talking about? The policy of Aboriginalisation is not thought out, the contradictions in the policy are not thought through. The main documents that exists are the AEP documents, the IESIP documents, the HR Policy and procedures and stuff in the school policy handbook – all airy-fairy. (Case Study 26)

In the face of high turnover of imported teaching staff and related difficulties with attendance, increasing the number of Indigenous teaching staff and people involved with the school in an official and paid capacity is a critical strategy for the department to vigorously pursue, requiring a focused and determined program.

It is not possible to get a precise figure on the number of Indigenous staff employed within NTDE. It does seem to be the case, however, that many Indigenous employees are located in casual or short-term positions. The key employment categories for Indigenous staff within the department are Teachers, Assistant Teachers, Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers and Aboriginal Resource Officers. Their various roles and significance to future reforms are discussed in turn.

Indigenous teachers

review data confirm the widespread anecdotal belief that trained local teachers are much more stable than non-local teachers. A less-frequently mentioned benefit of Indigenous teacher training is the effective use of these trained teachers in other positions in communities. The Batchelor Institute has tracked its graduates and found that over 80% are in full-time employment—but not necessarily in schools. Affirming Batchelor's research, the review encountered many trained Indigenous teachers who are now working in council offices, progress associations, in community stores, running women's centres or occupying health promotion positions. In some cases, they return to teaching. Beyond the expansion of Indigenous people in employment, there can be no better role models to convince Indigenous parents and their children of the value of education than the alumni of Batchelor Institute. It therefore stands to reason, as one contributor put it, 'that persuading local Indigenous people to undergo the long process of teacher training is a good long-term investment for improving Indigenous education' (Submission to review)

That NTDE is one of the largest employers of professionally trained Indigenous teachers in Australia is in part the product of bilingual education programs. Many trained teachers arose out of the assistant teacher categories as a direct result of being given clearly structured and meaningful roles with the introduction of bilingual schooling. It is imperative that Indigenous teacher training, building on the role of assistant teachers and by targetting talented senior students currently in secondary programs, is made a high priority across all regions. The mentoring program should be expanded, and jointly operated by the NTDE with the Batchelor Institute and NTU. Assistant teachers and teacher trainees need to be given release time, and the remaining staff in schools given clear strategies for how best to support the trainees' on-the-job learning.

Indigenous teachers should not be set up as the panacea for Indigenous education. Their own ability to attend regularly, like that of their students, can be an issue, for the same complex array of sociocultural reasons—including the high levels of morbidity and mortality in their communities. And their own English oracy, literacy and numeracy skills may not be well-developed. This can be addressed with professional development and greater assistance, which increasingly should be an important part of the role of non-local teachers as increased numbers of local recruits assume teacher positions. The level of determination Indigenous teacher trainees have already shown should not be underestimated. As one contributor noted

> Because of the relatively low level of literacy and English attained by previous generations of remote Indigenous people, it has take over a decade for most trainee teachers to complete Level 4,[*] and some have had to drop out along the way. Although their literacy and English has improved due to their training, it is still far below that of other trained teachers. This means that trained Indigenous teachers still need a lot of extra support, especially in the first year of teaching. (Submission to review)

Assistant teachers

Indigenous assistant teachers are frequently the longest serving members of the school staff, making them essential not only for continuity but for inducting new staff and mediating the cultural distance between the non-Indigenous teachers and the local students.

The review cannot overstate the importance of having Indigenous adults assisting in the class. The review came across many non-Indigenous teachers desperate to know how to program, and how to engage their students. One teacher spoke of her profound feelings of helplessness and professional failure in not being able to break the long silences of the girls in her class, which stretched over weeks at a time, and never being sure whether it was from shyness or incomprehension. The assistant teachers are often the only members of staff able to break the impasse, and have a pivotal role in broaching unreciprocated teacher efforts at dialogue. Assistant teachers feature heavily in the early childhood classrooms of many remote area schools, in response to the fact that small children come with a poor command of English and no literacy experience, and require a lot of one-to-one attention.

The review was concerned to note the variation in the salary levels of Aboriginal and Islander education workers and assistant teacher positions when it seems there are only minor differences between the duties of the AIEW and the AT positions. The assistant teachers are required to

- plan and conduct lessons
- assist teaching staff in the development of Aboriginal Studies
- provide advice on Indigenous culture, language traditions etc
- serve on school committees as required.

[*] The final year of tertiary-level training for the Indigenous teacher.

With the AIEW duty statement, although it doesn't state it clearly, most of the duties are the same, but AIEWs seem to have more of an explicit community linkage role. Whatever the differences, it doesn't seem to justify the big variation in the salary scales. The salary scales of assistant teachers are in line with the level: AT Level 2 which is the equivalent of an administrative officer Level 1 (A01), AT Level 3 = A02 and AT Level 4 = A03. In contrast, AIEW salaries are at the AO4 level. The difference in salary levels between ATs and AIEWs despite their overlapping role and jurisdiction remains a concern to the review, which we recommend be reassessed in the interests of focusing on developing assistant teacher competencies.

Many contributors pointed to the anomalous staffing formulae whereby non-Indigenous teachers in communities are eligible for an assistant teacher, but an Indigenous teacher is not. The justification for this is that Indigenous teachers do not need assistance with translating—even though few are trained in the complex task of educational interpreting. This policy position implies that translation is the main benefit an AT confers, which ignores their role in assisting teachers to deal with multi-age and multi-ability classrooms by effectively creating smaller teaching groups. One contributor to the review also observed that their non-allocation to Indigenous teachers 'means that the apprenticeship for the next generation of teacher trainees is being undermined'. (Submission to review)

The review considers that the para-professional role of the assistant teacher needs to be explicitly recognised and trained for accordingly. In particular, assistant teachers need explicit skills in mediating between teachers/school and community members, students and parents. They are also required in greater numbers in upper primary and junior secondary, where the challenges confronting older children are currently poorly met. It should also be noted that the bilingual programs created the most explicit and meaningful role for ATs, and that with such support, many went on to become fully trained teachers. **This remains the promise of a well-structured scheme to support assistant teachers that need not remain concentrated in bilingual schools.**

Aboriginal and Islander education workers and Aboriginal resource officers

In 1989 the department employed community liaison officers (CLOs) under Commonwealth IESIP funding. CLO positions were then renamed Aboriginal Resource Officers (AROs) and Education Liaison Officers (ELOs). While these positions were widespread, they were based on short-term contracts and lacked any guarantee of continuity of employment at the end of each year. This meant that many experienced and effective staff sought and obtained work elsewhere. In contrast, the AIEW category was introduced in 1997 at the administrative officer Level 4 with equivalent permanency as other public servants in the department, essentially replacing the ELO category, at a total cost $2.5 million. There are thirty-seven Aboriginal and Islander education workers (AIEWs) employed exclusively in urban areas in the Northern Territory, and forty-five Aboriginal resource officers (AROs) employed in urban and non-urban schools. These positions tend to be highly valued in schools which have to compete for the limited number of positions available within the IESIP-funded program. The review is aware that the Batchelor Institute is offering two VET certificates for AIEWs. However, the level of funding provided by NTETA falls far short of the demand for the course.

Like assistant teachers, Indigenous education workers, and liaison officers of various types, play crucial roles in supporting Indigenous students, establishing ASSPA committees, running breakfast programs, collecting students, and brokering the relationship between school staff and parents.

AIEWs are exclusively located in urban schools with the deliberate aim of increasing the Indigenous staff presence in urban schools. The decision to place an AIEW at a school is determined on the number of Indigenous students enrolled at the school, with the minimum student enrolment required being sixty-five. At present this means that such schools as Henbury, Nemarluk and the Don Dale Centre are ineligible. The senior secondary schools are likewise penalised. The review sighted correspondence from schools questioning the allocation criteria and received a number of submissions outlining in detail the difficulty schools have had in attracting funding for an AIEW or an ARO, or in trying to convert one to the other. These contributors argued that such positions

- provide an essential component of classroom literacy and numeracy support to Indigenous students
- increase the students' sense of belonging by having an Indigenous presence in the school and someone the students' could relate to
- assist children with the transition between bush school and urban school life.

One senior secondary college ASSPA committee observed

> For the last couple of years we have had to do with a part-time ARO which we find totally inappropriate to our indigenous students' needs. In 1998 there were four different people in this position, as AROs do not enjoy the same conditions as an AIEW, they don't stay very long. The committee feels that because of this situation, it is hard to attract the right person who will stay long enough to learn and understand the system and build a rapport with the students and staff .... This situation can be tolerated no longer .... Under current policy re. student numbers we will never achieve the required number of students because we only have Years 11 and 12 to draw numbers from.

Despite their similar roles and responsibilities, AIEWs and AROs have markedly dissimilar salary and working conditions. AIEWs entitlements include

- permanency
- 92% of an AO4 level salary scale ($36 044 – $41 384)
- access to the complete NTPS conditions of service—superannuation, sick leave, recreation leave, maternity leave etc.
- salary continuation during school stand-down periods.

This compares unfavorably with ARO entitlements

- no permanency, therefore no access to NTPS conditions of service
- varied hours of employment with the maximum allocation being four hours a day, five days a week—many AROs work beyond this hourly allocation with no remuneration
- forty-three AROs are on Part-Time Instructor Level 1 salary of $14.68 per hour and two AROs are on Part-Time Instructor Level 2 salary of $20.99 per hour, thus the maximum amount of pay an ARO might receive is $15 708, while the minimum is $3 142
- no salary during school stand-down periods
- beyond a period of one school year, there is no guarantee of ongoing employment as funding is only available to schools on a submission basis during Term 4 of each year.

In fact the disparities seem even more incongruous when it is considered that out of eighty-two combined AIEW and ARO positions, only twenty-two AROs are working in non-urban schools and there are a number who are not school based but are in regional offices. Linked to the facts that

- attendance rates are worse and worsening in non-urban areas
- essentially the AROs carry out the same duties as AIEWs and are integral to assisting the improvement of attendance

it becomes a cause for concern that the bulk of these positions are located in urban areas. It is recommended that the IESIP review fully evaluate the current allocation, mix and location of AIEW/ARO positions and that increased IESIP resources be directed toward this program in 2000 and for the quadrennium 2001–2004.

Concern was raised with the review that in some schools, much of the responsibility for Indigenous students was delegated, perhaps unintentionally, to the AIEWs and AROs by other staff particularly when there were problems, rather than taking a 'whole-of-school' approach. This is a management problem that principals need to be alert to. In every school visited by the review all staff and principals placed the highest value on the work of the AIEWs and AROs, described frequently as being 'indispensable to the work of the school'.

Professional development for Indigenous staff

A more intense and structured effort is required from NTDE to support the skilling of Indigenous staff, especially in the area of teaching English as a second or foreign language. As will be discussed under Adult education, one of the client groups for the community study centres being established by the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) will be the community-based staff of the NTDE. The review recommends that the department enter into agreements with training providers such as BIITE to provide the release time and support for their staff seeking to gain initial qualifications, to undertake inservice training, or to upgrade their qualifications.

In 1997, an undertaking was given to AIEWs by the department that an accredited training course would be developed and implemented for AIEWs and some AROs. Certificate III and IV in Indigenous Education Work was developed and will be delivered by BIITE in Semester 2 1999. The aim of the course is to provide participants with the basic skills and knowledge needed to assist in the classroom and act as liaison officers or advocates for Indigenous students within the school system. In particular, participants will gain the following skills and knowledge

- resource development
- classroom management
- workplace literacy/numeracy
- basic technology usage
- interpersonal skills development
- development of health awareness and hygiene of children.

The Certificate III in Indigenous Education Work is comprised of fifteen subjects and has a nominal duration of 720 hours taking two years to complete on a part-time basis.

Recommendations – Indigenous recruits

Indigenous teachers and other Indigenous staff

It is recommended that

70 NTDE develops and implements a strategy to vigorously pursue an increase in the number of Indigenous teachers and Indigenous people involved with schools in an official and paid capacity as the best long-term solution for addressing high teacher turnover and to support a major recommendation of this review to achieve the active involvement of Indigenous people in the control and delivery of their own education services

71 NTDE increases the proportion of Indigenous staff in senior non-school-based administrative positions

Assistant teachers

It is recommended that

72 the para-professional role of the assistant teacher is explicitly recognised and supported with appropriate training

73 staffing formulas are revised to ensure that all remote area teachers share the same entitlements to assistant teachers, and to ensure an assistant teacher presence in secondary classes

AIEWs and AROs

It is recommended that

74 the IESIP review fully evaluate the current allocation, mix and location of AIEW/ARO positions and that increased IESIP resources be directed toward this program in 2000 and for the quadrennium 2001–2004—the IESIP review should have regard to the need to maintain the flexibility between permanent and part-time positions

75 in the light of the high value placed on the educational return for students of the work of these staff and their continuing professional development, that the NTDE move to progressively incorporate these positions into the core business funding of the department

Professional development of Indigenous staff

It is recommended that

76 NTDE develops and implements an intense and structured effort to support the skilling of Indigenous staff especially in the area of teaching English as a second or foreign language

77 the mentoring program is continued and expanded

78 NTDE negotiates with NTETA to provide a greater level of funding for AIEW professional development

79 the department enters into agreements with training providers such as the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) and provide the release time and support for their staff seeking to gain initial qualifications, to undertake inservice training, or to upgrade their qualifications

Access and provision

Factoring in remoteness

The Griffith Service Access Frame (GSAF) is a model used for quantifying the access disadvantage of remote and rural populations to education services. The model, using various statistical measures related to time/cost/distance and economic resources, produces a score which quantifies the relative access of the population centre. The GSAF uses five Zones of Relative Access from Zone 1 with the best access to services, to Zone 5 with the worst.

Its developer, Dr Dennis Griffith, has recently used this methodology to show a correlation between measured academic outcomes and remoteness, which in turn reflects levels of access to education for Indigenous students. The analysis was conducted using the 1997 Northern Territory Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP) reading test (Griffith 1999). Griffith notes that this preliminary research has to be treated with caution due to data imperfections—principally the exclusion of absentee students from the data with a presumption they would have scored zero. With these and other reservations,[7] the analysis shows an obvious trend confirming that the greater the access disadvantage of the school, the poorer the results from the MAP tests become.

A relevant section in Dr Griffith's paper is quoted below:

> **CONCLUSION**
> It is found that student achievement in the MAP reading test is influenced by the level of access to education. The five Zones of Relative Access determined using the Griffith Service Access Frame can be seen to be highly correlated to student performance in the MAP reading test in schools located in each of the Zones.
>
> The analysis has demonstrated that the ranking of performances on the MAP reading test would have those schools from Zone 1 at the top, Zone 2 as second and Zone 3 would be ranked third. Results from Zones 3 and 4 were not found to be significantly different, however the mean logit scores from Zone 3 students was higher than that of the mean logit score of Zone 4 students. Zone 5 students clearly had the lowest achievement of all results examined, indicating that the more access disadvantaged the student, the lower the achievement on the MAP test.
>
> The analysis of these scores helps confirm the profusion of anecdotal evidence that the greater the educational disadvantage of the school, the lower the level of academic achievement. It is not within the scope of this preliminary analysis to determine all the factors associated with isolation which may have an additive or multiplicative effect on educational outcomes, but clearly in the Northern Territory the more access disadvantaged the school, the greater the educational disadvantage.

This research confirms that poor access to quality schooling is a critical part of the poor outcomes picture.

[7] For example, Griffith cautions that other factors, such as first language used in the urban/remote cohorts and concerns about the MAP tests themselves, would also affect outcomes, and therefore the results should be treated as indicative only.

Early childhood services

Many contributors to the review emphasised the importance of an early acquisition of literacy, pointing out that children who fall behind are unlikely to catch up and in fact are more likely to find the gap widening in secondary school. Some put it to the review that illiteracy at grade four level is unlikely to ever be remedied, pointing to the need for early intervention.

A common diagnosis of why Indigenous children perform less well in Western schools is that they 'lack a schooling culture'. In the preamble of the PAC Report for instance, the committee stated 'The Committee believes that Aboriginal parents who have the legal responsibility in the NT to ensure that their children attend school regularly, need continued assistance in developing a schooling culture and an acceptance of their role in the education process' (PAC 1996: xix), and further, that 'Aboriginal communities in remote areas need support to develop a schooling culture' (ibid: xx).

The review understood the notion of 'schooling culture' to refer both to the wider sociocultural domain that Western schools are part of, and also the intimate domestic practices within families that prepare children for the disciplines of school-based learning. The research literature certainly supports the view that young children who come from literate households, where reading and writing material of all types are readily available, where children have been read to from an early age and where the primary carers are visible users of literacy skills, are most likely themselves to become successful readers and writers (QSCC 1998: 58 - 65).

However, little is precisely known about 'the specific literacy features of the environment upon which the school expects to draw' (Heath 1996: 12), and even less about 'the variety of ways children from non-mainstream homes learn about reading, writing and using oral language to display knowledge in their preschool environment' (ibid: 13). Not surprisingly then, schools and teachers are not trained or given specific techniques in recognising and possibly reorienting the starting points of children in their classrooms, especially where these radically deviate from mainstream norms.

Given that for many Indigenous students, the school is the predominant and in some cases the only site of literacy and numeracy practice, it is critical that every effort is made to introduce the precursors to literacy and numeracy in all available environments. Literacy and numeracy precursors include, importantly, access to paper and writing equipment for 'scribble' and formative letter making, and structured play to introduce both literacy and numeracy concepts, e.g. measurement, shape and location, and the handling and interpretation of quantitative data (Berk 1994; Stone 1995).

Good practice – Parents as literacy teachers

The three pilot projects in Amoonguna, Elliot and Mt Allan are aimed at increasing Indigenous family input into early literacy acquirement. Working empathetically with parents and toddlers, the project officer demystifies activities that would normally take place at home, in playgroups or in child-care centres in urban settings. Using a mobile playgroup—a round tarp, books, toys and other literacy equipment—Indigenous adults develop intellectually sound understandings of how they can be involved in the early literacy development of their children through such methods as: storytelling, recognising print, playing with paper, scribbling, art and craft work, educational games; playing with and buying books; modelling reading; teaching sounds and colours, etc. Project results show that the children of parents who have been involved in the program are more confident learners with a greatly enhanced ability to take up reading and greater familiarity with classroom practices and expectations, by the time they are enrolled in primary school. Parents from the project have increased confidence with English literacy and are very comfortable with being in the school, helping the children and talking with teachers. In one community, a bona-fide preschool has been set up as a result of the project.

The role in literacy acquisition played by libraries in mainstream culture cannot be underestimated. There are twenty community —public—libraries in remote Indigenous communities. Nearly half of these are joint-use school and community libraries, pooling community facilities and funding. Joint-use libraries offer substantial benefits, and with a vigorous, integrated policy approach by NTDE together with the Northern Territory Library and Information Service these benefits could be more fully realised. Regardless, the school library, whether or not it is jointly run with a community library service, is a primary resource for literacy learning in early childhood and should be recognised as such with the provision of appropriate resources. Through public as well as school library funding, there are substantial opportunities for the promotion of literacy and numeracy through culturally appropriate and targeted programs.

Current policy

The NTDE operates 104 preschool education programs, fifty-four of which are in Indigenous communities. The minimum enrolment for an approved preschool program is twelve, which would entitle the school to a 0.5 preschool teacher—but as it is generally not possible to recruit half-time staff to isolated schools, 'the teacher equivalent generated by the adjusted enrolment for the preschool is added to the teacher equivalent for the primary section of the school to calculate staff entitlement'[7]. As noted by Willsher and Clarke, this means in practice that 'the majority of schools that offer a preschool program appear to do so by combining it with other classes' (Willsher 1995: 76). Willsher and Clarke also cite a 1994 needs analysis of the Barkly region showing only one out of eleven teachers in one-teacher schools had any prior experience of early childhood teaching.

[7] Source: NTDE Staffing Entitlement for Schools Guidelines

According to the *Schools Policy Handbook*, small primary schools without recognised preschools should not normally enrol children under the age of five but if an Indigenous preschool exists, children may be admitted when they turn three years of age, but must be accompanied by a parent.[23] In other words, if a school does not already have a preschool, children will miss out altogether. The current aim of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Operational Plan is to increase the number of preschools 'during the 1997–1999 triennium ... by one per year' (Aboriginal Education Policy Support Unit 1997: 12), providing staffing formula requirements are met. In view of the importance of early childhood in laying the foundations for future schooling success, this goal, combined with the lack of a coherent focus on early childhood, is clearly inadequate.

Some schools have attempted to deal with this by meeting the shortfall in early childhood education themselves. For example, the Principal of Batchelor Area School has, by scratching around for money—$3000—established an early literacy program for preschoolers – 'The Batchelor Kindy'. The sessions are conducted every Monday from 1.15 pm to 2.45 pm on the basis that one or more parents or carers accompany the child to the lessons that are conducted by a trained teacher. There is a modest donation of $2 per week and the program is 'nursed' by a dedicated and enthusiastic parent. It was clear that parents were getting as much benefit from the program as the children. An IESIP-funded project, Early Childhood Programs for Aboriginal Children, has seen the development of a range of early childhood initiatives, some forty-four projects in all, aimed at increasing the attendance and retention of 3–5-year-old children. While the program has confirmed the widespread demand for early childhood education services, and funded notable successes—including the mobile preschools marked by this review as good practice in the field—it is a submission-based program with a limited lifespan and not the comprehensive approach required.

Good practice – Clyde Fenton Mobile Preschool

Clyde Fenton Primary School has identified improvement in Indigenous education outcomes as a priority. In early 1997 it established a mobile preschool to take early childhood services into two Indigenous camps near the school, meeting the education needs of students in the 3–5 year age group. Prior to this, the mobile preschools operated under the umbrella of the regional office. Each day the preschool teacher travels to both communities and a part-time preschool aide employed from the communities helps the teacher and parents with the children. This process has fostered the participation of Indigenous parents and allowed the children early exposure to books, paints, and the schooling methodology generally. In one of the Indigenous communities, the preschool teacher commenced at the school working under a tree with a small tarp and limited hands-on equipment which she carried in the boot of her own car. Following a number of negotiations she worked at one end of a Community Council workshop and then moved into the old health clinic building. Resources were found to purchase a closed-in trailer to carry the ever-increasing resources. In the second Indigenous community, the school was successful in obtaining an Early Childhood Program grant to establish safe, aesthetically pleasing preschool grounds which are conducive to outside activity-based play. The staff involved in the mobile preschools are highly dedicated and motivated. The lessons are marked by being held in the community and are strongly supported by local mothers.

[23] This last policy has no particular argumentation but has been tracked to a memorandum issued by the Welfare Branch in April 1970 on behalf of H.C. Giese (correspondence advice to A/g Director Aboriginal Education Branch from Graham McGill, 10 August 1998).

Recommendations – Early childhood

It is recommended that

80 there be an increase in the exposure of all Indigenous children to early literacy and numeracy learning in vernacular where appropriate and Standard Australian English oracy.

81 NTDE investigates joint funding arrangements with Territory Health Services, DETYA and the Federal Department of Family and Children's Services to develop play centres and distribute reading and pre-literacy material and educational play equipment to all sites that are accessible to parents and children, for example, health clinics and women's centres. This would build on the THS-NTDE Framework Agreement on the Provision of Early Childhood and Outside School Hours Care Services for Young Territory Children (NTDE/THS 1999).

82 mobile preschools and playgroups are considered as interim solutions to ensure guaranteed access for all children to structured early childhood education.

83 sufficient funding is sought to enhance the key role libraries play in the development of literacy outcomes for Indigenous students and opportunities for coordinated service development and a coordinated approach to funding are explored.

84 within a period of five years, there be guaranteed access to play centres and preschools for all children in the three to five year age group.

85 new facilities for infants and toddlers should be designed with the aim of establishing multipurpose early childhood centres that offer infant health and other early childhood services. Such centres would not need to be administered by the school but could be run by other suitable organisations.

86 the multipurpose early childhood centres incorporate childcare facilities for Indigenous school staff and young mothers who are still students.

The aim of these initiatives would be to make explicit the pre-learning upon which the school system is predicated. By providing the necessary space, props and developmentally appropriate activities, literacy and numeracy understandings will be developed that will assist the transition into the artificial and disciplined world of the classroom and its modes of instruction, making the transition to school more continuous and ultimately more successful. **The review regards the availability of forms of pre-literacy exposure as fundamental to the success of future reforms.**

Primary school services

Primary school is core to the educational process. The requirements for success in all Indigenous schools follow the principle that optimum conditions are necessary to realise the full benefits. At a minimum, teachers need

- experience as teachers, i.e. they have taught in a few different classes before teaching students with specialist learning needs
- training in ESL/EFL/TESOL and/or access to on-site specialist expertise
- an ability to team-teach successfully with Indigenous staff where Indigenous co-workers are part of the school
- suitable high-quality literacy and numeracy support material and a structured process for literacy and numeracy instruction
- an understanding of, and empathy with, the children
- an understanding of the community development and health requirements of their role
- an ability to stay in the school for a minimum period of two, and ideally more, years.

The review has further established that improvements in outcomes in both urban and remote area schools, primary and secondary, require that

- students attend schools for the duration of the programs being taught
- students are tested for their progress in English oracy, literacy and numeracy
- schools and principals are held accountable for student learning
- schools and principals are focused on improving learning conditions
- parents are involved, and feel encouraged to be involved, in their children's education.

Many of these components to successful outcomes at the primary school level require fuller discussion and are in fact dealt with as discrete issues in separate sections in this report.

In general, facilities for primary schooling are good. There is an extensive primary school network, although some have leveled the criticism that in this area the government has overextended by establishing more schools than it can decently service. Most of the smaller schools run multi-age, multigrade and multi-ability classrooms, compounded by a high turnover of visiting staff. Indeed, the reality with all classes with high proportions of Indigenous students is that they are all mixed-ability classes—which anywhere requires smaller class sizes.

One of the critical priorities of primary schools is to significantly improve the Standard Australian English skills of its Indigenous students. It was suggested to the review that the English as a second language for Indigenous-Language-Speaking Students (ESL ILSS) program, which is making inroads with Standard Australian English at Year 1 level, is excellent, and needs to be extended to the middle and upper primary levels. The Commonwealth Government funded ESL ILSS program was introduced in Territory schools in 1998 for Grade 1 Indigenous students who have been assessed as having a language barrier preventing them from being able to participate in the classroom in English.

In accordance with Commonwealth guidelines, the ESL ILSS program provides support during the first year of formal schooling, usually Year 1, the expectation being that after one year in the program, the students will be performing within Level One of the speaking strand of the *NT ESL Outcomes Profile*. As such, each student is eligible to attract an ESL ILSS payment only once. Yet teachers in many schools expressed their concern that ESL ILSS resources are needed throughout the schooling years, both to catch up with students who were past Year 1 when the program was first introduced and to match the increased level of explicit English instruction that occurs in later primary and again in early secondary. In other words, ESL ILSS support should correspond with the increasing levels of sophistication in academic demand.

However it must be acknowledged that the 1998 ESL ILSS attendance data in NT schools provides grim reinforcement of the review's findings that poor attendance has become an educational crisis in Indigenous schools. The data has been disaggregated into the number of days over a 200-day school year that students have been attending ESL ILSS classes. As noted, the ESL ILSS program is designed to provide intensive oral English skills for ESL children in the critical age range of the first compulsory year of schooling. **Full attendance is vital over the whole school year for the students to get a real grounding in oral English skills**. The data show that of the total number of 757 students enrolled in ESL ILSS across the NT fifty-five did not attend classes at all; almost 500 had only attended for half the year or less; a total of only nineteen attended between 161 and 200 days, and only four of that group were in the top cohort of 181–200 days.

The recommendations which will make a difference to outcomes in primary are listed in discrete sections throughout this report. In the concluding chapter to this review, a series of significant recommendations are made to establish a new approach to Indigenous education. The minimum conditions laid down for the Education Agreement in Self-Managing Schools, elaborated in the conclusion, should apply to all schools. As one contributor to the review noted, 'We waste a lot of time writing submissions for little bits of money from all over the place. While some good work gets done this way, sometimes we'd like to lump all the money together and do something really worthwhile'. The Self-Managing School pilots, recommended in the conclusion to this review, will meet this aim.

In the education partnership agreements to be negotiated as a key recommendation of this review and in discussions with parents and communities in all schools, the message must be delivered that if attendance does not improve, any additional and successful learning resources are at real risk.

Secondary school services

The review proposes three key strategies for improving secondary access: a new definition of community education centres as area schools; a significantly increased capacity of secondary schools to offer boarding facilities; and the development of better options for students who cannot take on mainstream secondary courses.

There are large and growing numbers of secondary-school-age children in Indigenous communities who are simply not being provided with effective secondary education. The review recognises that it is not realistic to put high schools in every community. But, in the absence of any overarching policy on the provision of compulsory school-age secondary education for remote area Indigenous students, what is in place is haphazard and ad hoc, driven by teachers and principals desperate to provide a service with few options or resources.

Outside the urban centres, access to secondary education for Indigenous children is available under circumscribed conditions. It is NTDE policy that all secondary compulsory school-age children must undertake Northern Territory Board of Studies (NTBOS) approved courses, delivered by approved secondary school course providers. The only recognised providers of secondary education in the NT are the high schools, area schools, senior colleges and the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC). NTOEC offers a range of correspondence-based courses for around 920 secondary students, of whom around 300 are based in Indigenous schools. Courses are supported in varying degrees by telephone/computer tutoring and community-based supervisors. The community education centres (CECs) and community schools are not recognised, and therefore are not resourced, as secondary providers.

Good practice: Katherine School of the Air – Aboriginal Education Program

Katherine School of the Air—the largest classroom in the world—established its Aboriginal Education Program in 1991 after being approached for assistance by Indigenous people from the Daly River area. This is a successful rural education project providing an education program to rural Indigenous students who might otherwise miss out on an education. From these small beginnings there are now around 100 students from seventeen isolated communities being supported and a continually growing enrolment. The students are grouped in geographical 'clusters' with committed and much travelled teachers each supporting around fifteen students. The review was able to visit an 'Inschool' at KSA in Katherine and to also see the Program at work in the Acacia School. An outstanding feature of this program is the tremendous involvement of parents and family in the children's schooling. At Acacia it was obvious that the school program was the central daily activity for the whole community. The adults as well as the children were developing English oracy, literacy and numeracy skills. There was an interactive and effective learning environment despite the inadequate facilities. Student records showed that the program is producing an increasing level of oracy, literacy and numeracy skills for its students. The project won the 1998 Australian Rural Education Award.

The pathway for most non-Indigenous students is that they undertake a requisite number of NTBOS approved courses until Year 10, at the completion of which they are issued a Junior Secondary Studies Certificate (JSSC). From there, students are eligible to leave school, perhaps to enter the TAFE sector, or to move on to vocationally or academically oriented subjects in Years 11 and 12. The pathway for many Indigenous students exiting the primary school system, who find that NTOEC courses or leaving the community to attend a boarding institution or college are not viable options, is less straightforward.

The significant number that cannot move into JSSC courses are frequently placed within one of three bridging courses—Special Category Curriculum Courses—Intensive English, Foundation Studies and General Studies. Using IESIP funding, the bridging courses were developed as an alternative to children dropping out altogether due to inability to move into mainstream courses. In the words of one contributor,

> There was nothing for secondary-age kids—no programs, no accountability. It was a real issue, people were doing their own thing, there were no records being kept. That was the impetus for developing the board approved courses, to bring kids up to JSSC, with moderated courses. Some people say they are over-moderated, but that is in response to the original absence.

The review heard widespread criticism of the courses that they are not sufficiently challenging for students and take too long before a student can finally move into Year 8. **It is not possible to gauge how many graduates of the bridging interventions do in fact move onto mainstream secondary, as the data are not kept.** Teachers and principals complained that the courses were overly rigid, 'Bridging courses are heavily structured—"this is what you have to do"—it's very prescriptive. They are awful. And it is hard to enthuse the kids over something that is uninspiring'. By the time bridging students 'graduate' they are significantly older than their mainstream counterparts and are faced with teaching materials and peers which do not reflect their maturity or interests. In the words of one school manager, '[the courses] are problematic, partly because kids would be twenty-one by the time they got to Year 8, if you followed every boring task'.

The review was advised, however, that it is not necessary to follow every task slavishly. If teachers used the placement tests that are part of the bridging courses to good effect, students could be articulated into mainstream at any time. That this tends not to be done is put down to staffing limitations. Secondary teachers are often not trained in how to prepare a student for learning but rather, are oriented toward the refinement of specialist subject areas and are reliant on students having already mastered the basics. As one contributor noted in his submission—based on Masters level research on the issues surrounding secondary teaching in remote schools—in many schools the secondary classes are organised as primary classes, with one teacher supervising all subjects over the whole day. They are multi-age, multi-ability and multisubject-area classrooms, with one teacher stretched across all the different levels. Even in urban areas the problems associated with poor literacy skills at entry point leave secondary teachers feeling helpless. In one urban secondary school, the principal made the following grim diagnosis, 'We have to be honest. Our success rate at picking up kids who are way behind on their literacy when they come in is poor—they just fall further behind'. (Case Study 17)

As one contributor to the review noted the problem is compounded for students who are eligible for JSSC courses via the Northern Territory Open Education Centre, often with the aid of correspondence supervisors who are ill-equipped for their role and not required to have training.

> In many cases it is whoever the school can get. Consequently they may not be at a higher level of academic achievement than the students ... This can be very frustrating for the teachers because the students on [correspondence] lessons are the high achievers in the community. They have the potential to become the leaders in the community and yet they often have interrupted schooling with an inadequate supervisor. (Submission to review)

Recognising the problems associated with bridging courses and retaining student interests, the staff at Katherine High School developed their own special category curriculum. They successfully gained temporary accreditation from NTBOS in order to properly assess the course value educationally. Obviously the educational evaluation and further development of these courses should continue, with attention paid to their relevance and applicability elsewhere. To this end, the review further recommends that the special category curriculum be reviewed to ensure students bridge into mainstream curriculum as quickly as possible.

Good practice: Innovations for secondary students at Katherine High School

In 1998 the number of Indigenous students attending Katherine High School (KHS) from the outlying Indigenous communities had dropped alarmingly. In an entirely teacher-based initiative, strongly supported and advocated by the principal of KHS, a survey was conducted in the surrounding communities to assess the concerns students and parents had with what was being offered at the school. The results were published in the KHS *Indigenous Programs Review Report* in 1998. Based on the findings of this report a completely new educational program was written by the teachers for Indigenous students and given temporary accreditation by the NTBOS for use in the school in 1999. The review is neither competent or resourced to be able to comment on the educational soundness of the new linked courses, but notes the immediate result was an increase in the number of Indigenous students at KHS. Both the teacher-led review and research report, followed by the writing and implementation of the courses in a short time frame, is an outstanding testimony to the professional competence and dedication of the teachers involved.

Parent and student aspirations

Without doubt, most parents would prefer their children to be able to access well-supervised and stimulating secondary schooling in their home communities. This theme was reiterated in all communities visited by the review and in a number of submissions. Current research commissioned by Kormilda College being conducted by Dr Merridy Malin and the Reverend Jim Downing, based on dialogue with parents and school graduates about their aspirations and ideas for improving secondary schooling into residential secondary school, confirms this finding.

Malin and Downing also found that some parents will still want to send their children away to secondary school because they 'view the local CECs as an inferior system of education, even for those aspiring to the trades'. These parents believe that 'if they do not send their children away for a good secondary education ... the children will lose their motivation to learn and develop the skills necessary for obtaining the jobs'. Malin and Downing's work amongst parents also highlighted parent aspirations encountered repeatedly by the review

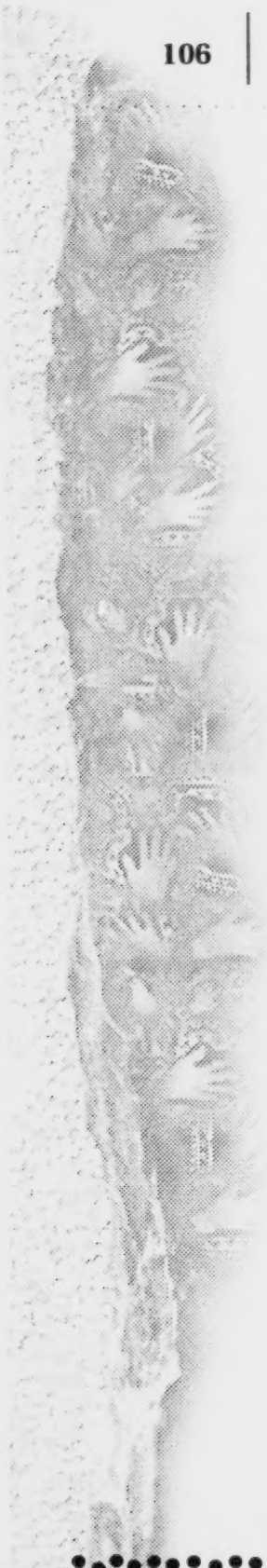
> These parents are telling us that they want their children's education to lead to jobs, and a choice among many kinds of jobs including as lawyers, mechanics, musicians and clerks, whatever the child aspires to. To achieve this, they believe their children must be strong in English and able to operate in a wider world than the local community. Equally important, however, they want their children to remain strong in their own culture; not to forget their mother tongue. These aspirations being expressed today, have been repeated by indigenous parents over and over, for the past two decades at least.

Good practice: Yuendumu School

This school runs a program of specialised classes for senior boys and senior girls at Alice Springs High School and the Centre for Appropriate Technology. The classes provide practical skills within a program of socialisation which operates for the whole time the students are away from Yuendumu. 'Students are immersed in an environment in which English is the lingua franca and the predominant culture is Western, hence they are given a valuable opportunity to improve their competence in speaking and thinking in English, and tc observe different ways of living and behaving. Exposure to the idiomatic, figurative, and allegorical use of English, and the protocols of social exchange in their natural settings will in time enhance students' understanding of Western thought forms and processes, and modes of behaviour.' The value of educationally based excursions for students from bush schools is well recognised and needs to be further supported by appropriate funding. At the public meeting held outside the council office at Yuendumu to discuss the review, which was dominated by debate on bilingual education, a traditional elder asked a very pertinent question 'How do the Vietnamese, Greeks, Italians, get their languages recognised by the government—that SBS TV, I see it at night, doesn't the government pay for that—how do they do it ?'.

Residential facilities

The major residential colleges in both the government and non-government sector have been providing education services to Indigenous students from remote communities for a very long time. The colleges and hostels in the Northern Territory are currently providing for around 500 students, with a range of transitional and foundation courses through to Year 12, as well as specialist and VET courses. Even a casual reference across communities to the alumni of these colleges indicates the great value to some students at least of this form of education.



In order to be informed on the success or otherwise of the residential colleges in meeting their outcomes targets, the review accessed the IESIP reporting documents they are required to submit each year. The review noted one Feedback Comment from DETYA raising a question about the appropriateness of IESIP funding being used to support Indigenous students at urban residential colleges. The comment read

> There is another question that needs to be asked. In bringing students into Darwin you are broadening their life skills, but what are these students losing in respect of their culture, when you take them away from their communities for five years?

The days when residential colleges were part of a system where students were 'taken away' from communities for an education, without reference to their own wishes or those of their families, are long gone. It can be asserted without equivocation that most students at either the residential colleges or hostels are there because they want to be there, and/or their families want them to be there. As has been noted, leaving home to access education is clearly not for everyone. The review however heard from many students and their families, that for a range of reasons this option was what they wanted. The fact is that the options available to Indigenous parents remain quite limited. If students are able to undertake JSSC courses, they can stay at the CEC, and attempt to study via correspondence, or they have to be sent to a residential school. **However, the question of what impact this may have on their culture is largely a matter of judgment for the students and their families.**

There are problems with some students at the colleges on occasion, evidenced by misbehaviour, stemming from homesickness or deciding they do not want to board away from home for whatever reason. In these cases the students can, and do, return home. However, it is obvious that for a significant number of Indigenous students the colleges and high schools are providing a positive educational and social experience. As has been the case for a long time, Indigenous students excel at all sporting activities in their schools well out of proportion to their numbers, and this is a matter of pride and satisfaction to them.

Good practice – Junior ASSPA at Tennant Creek High

The review was able to speak to many students at the colleges and high schools. It was encouraging to see so many self-confident and assured young Indigenous students achieving and taking positions of leadership in their schools. At Tennant Creek High School, the review's visit was hosted for the whole day by four Indigenous students who comprised the 'Junior ASSPA Committee'. These committee members showed the team a number of initiatives benefiting students they had been responsible for introducing at the school, including computers, a washing machine and dryer for students to clean their clothes if needed, and lockers to safely store school stationery and books. It was clear during the day from their easy and confident interaction with other students and staff that they were respected as leaders and acted as a bridge between students and staff, sorting minor misunderstandings before they got out of hand. When asked what the formal (parents) ASSPA committee did, one student responded (tongue-in-cheek) 'They rubber-stamp our decisions!'

On-site delivery

The review heard widespread concern and frustration from community schools at their inability to provide an adequate education for their secondary students. Many schools strongly expressed the view that they should be able to provide properly accredited secondary education on site and be resourced to do so in a similar manner as the present area schools at Batchelor, Jabiru and Alyangula. However, it would seem that the present staffing formula for the existing three area schools was developed with a view to meeting the needs of a predominantly non-Indigenous remote-area student group. The only current initiative to achieve area school status in areas with predominantly Indigenous students is a three-year trial underway at Xavier School and Murrupurtiyanuwu on Bathurst Island.

In the absence of clear policy guidelines on secondary provider eligibility and requirements, the natural tendency for people on the ground is to fill the vacuum with hearsay. For example, at a supervisor's workshop at an NTOEC residential at Dripstone High School attended by the review, a supervisor stated that she had been discouraged from applying for area school status—and so did not—by advice that it would remove a number of beneficial conditions the school currently enjoyed. The review's discovery of such policy misunderstandings repeats the findings from an investigation conducted by the senior policy officer responsible for secondary-age Indigenous students which found that

> it has become clear ... that there is a need to develop policy objectives and guidelines for the education of secondary-age Indigenous students, and both short and long implementation strategies to work more effectively towards achieving the goals and outcomes identified for this group of students in the *National Strategy Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996–2002*.

There is an urgent need for the NTDE to address the current policy vacuum that exists in respect of appropriate secondary Indigenous education. To this end, the review strongly recommends that within six months, the NTDE will have developed policy options for ensuring guaranteed access to secondary schooling, including an identification of the resource requirements. This should include a review of CECs with a view to establishing all CECs as secondary providers, i.e. able to implement board approved special category and mainstream secondary curriculum. As the current area school staffing formula was developed with particular school contexts in mind, for example, it does not include allocation for assistant teachers, it would be difficult to simply apply the area school formula directly to CECs or to primary schools with aspirations of becoming secondary providers. In other words, formula determinations will have to be completely reassessed. Possibilities include enabling CEC/area schools to assume responsibility for teaching English and mathematics on site with local teachers, with other courses covered through correspondence lessons.

> **Many Indigenous students in bush communities often live in the most difficult circumstances, speak an Indigenous Australian language and are immersed in traditional Indigenous culture. To then acquire the utterly foreign language and cultural understandings of Western society and succeed in mastering both, poses a greater challenge than faces any other student in Australia.**
>
> **The extraordinary and heartening thing is that there have always been Indigenous people who could do it, and there still are.**

The policy development process must include community, training, and employer representation. There needs to be an assessment of available job opportunities in communities that Indigenous people should be able to access to enable sponsorship of students into identified jobs. Agencies that offer adult training should be involved in the planning, and the residential colleges and high schools that are teaching significant numbers of Indigenous students must also be directly involved.

The policy reassessment should also examine the possibility of expanding hostel arrangements currently operating successfully in Tennant Creek and Katherine. The two hostels accommodate around twenty to thirty students each. The students in both Tennant Creek and Katherine expressed satisfaction with their accommodation. It was also obvious that students in both hostels were benefiting in both educational and social terms from the hostels themselves and the education they were able to access at Tennant Creek and Katherine high schools. Both the Fordimail Hostel in Katherine and the Wangkana-Kari Hostel in Tennant Creek are full, and there is significant unmet demand. There are students attending residential colleges in Darwin and Alice Springs who would be in Katherine and Tennant Creek if the hostels could accommodate them. Many parents in both regions understandably expressed their strong preference for the easier access to their children that would be afforded by an expansion of the existing facilities in both centres. This option, while not satisfying the preferred option of most parents anywhere of having their children at home, would be a cost-effective way of providing quality secondary education closer to home.

Good practice: The Detour Project

The Detour Project is located in the Catholic mission premises on South Terrace in Alice Springs. It is a joint project between the Tangentyere Council and Centralian College. Territory Health Services, the Wine Cask Levy, and DETYA provide funding. Staff at Centralian College told the review they were concerned they were only accessing a small percentage of the numbers of Indigenous youth in Alice Springs that could be receiving secondary education. The Detour Project was begun to provide a supportive learning environment for these 'at risk' young people, the majority of whom live in difficult social conditions in the town camps of Alice Springs. Before Detour was established the students were not attending school at all and many were in constant trouble with the juvenile justice system. The project targets the whole family, not just the youth. On the day of the review visit we saw a very busy project with facilities stretched to the limit.

The Catholic Church has made its facilities on South Terrace available to the project, but there are difficulties in the existing learning environment for some of the students—outcomes would be enhanced if these could be addressed. The more advanced students who were receiving supervisory assistance with NTOEC courses are located in a heavily trafficked part of the building—there isn't anywhere else. While we were there the movement of other people from one room to another was constantly disturbing.

The most striking feature of the project was to see students from around eleven to over fifty years of age all heavily—and happily—engaged in learning together in the same environment. From our interaction with the students it was very clear that real education was taking place under difficult conditions.

Recommendations – Secondary schooling

It is recommended that

87 NTDE explores means of expanding the number of secondary courses that are available in remote areas and staffing them appropriately

88 within six months, the NTDE develops policy recommendations on secondary programs which provide for

- options for providing secondary programs to all Indigenous secondary-age students, with secondary trained teachers supported by ESL specialists
- conversion of community education centres to area school secondary providers, i.e. able to implement board approved special category and mainstream secondary curriculum, which are staffed accordingly
- the assessment of large rural schools that fall outside of the CEC category for their potential conversion to area school status
- a reassessment of remote area secondary school staff formula determinations
- expansion of the hostel arrangements currently operating successfully in Tennant Creek and Katherine
- an exploration of the options for providing high-quality state-of-the art IT&T support for distance learning
- an identification of overall resource requirements.

89 within twelve months NTDE has a clear policy on increasing secondary options to the end of the compulsory years for all Indigenous students, urban and remote.

Post-compulsory schooling

Vocational education and training

In partnership with the NT community, the Northern Territory Education and Training Authority (NTETA) funds vocational education and training (VET) to develop a skilled workforce to meet the needs of industry in a competitive marketplace and enable all Territorians access to vocational education and training opportunities.

Key reforms to the national VET system include a shift from traditional supply-driven mechanisms to a demand-based approach to training through the operation of user choice. NTETA has been concentrating on making the Northern Territory vocational education and training system more flexible, efficient, and able to accommodate the needs of industry in line with national VET goals.

Through its registered providers, NTETA provides a VET service to around 18 000 students, 30% of whom are Indigenous, from a budget of around $60 million.

At the moment funding for Vocational Education Training (VET) is only available to students in Years 11 and 12, which means that it is only available to Indigenous students in urban schools. There is national demand to extend VET into junior secondary. If it is to be of any use to Indigenous students in bush schools, it will have to be. For example, VET courses are currently provided in the Tiwi Islands by the Catholic Education Office to fill a clear need. The provision of these accredited courses was recognised by the Australian

National Training Authority (ANTA) in 1998 by nominating Xavier School as 'a leading-edge school in the provision of VET courses for school-age students'. However these courses are funded under great difficulty by the Catholic Education Office as no ANTA funds are available for senior secondary-age students who are not in formal Year 11 or Year 12 classes. This situation needs to be urgently corrected and commendations need to be backed up with funding.

A DETYA-funded School to Work Project being carried out from the Northern Territory Open Education Centre entitled 'VET in Rural and Remote Areas' is being conducted in Queensland, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory. The project began in 1998 and will conclude in 2000. The project is tasked with identifying appropriate ways to deliver VET to rural and remote locations. It is also tasked with identifying ways of enhancing links between schools, the VET sector and employment in remote locations, which is of particular relevance to the recommendations of this review. The project has already identified that although VET is an option for some students, in most cases the standard of the literacy and numeracy skills of the students does not enable them to complete VET accredited courses. Schools are investigating options available through vocational learning which offers a community-relevant, work-related program with a central component of improving students' literacy and numeracy skills. In a submission to the review the project officer noted two familiar problems for staff in bush schools which the recommendation to establish self-managing schools supported by the new IECNT is designed to address. In an attempt to get some kind of meaningful education for their secondary-age students, school staff had made

> submissions for funding to ASTF, Full Service Schools for students at risk, Commonwealth Programs, ANTA, NTETA and a variety of other DETYA programs (including VEGAS) to find the funds to commence or adequately resource their programs.

and

> The high rate of staff turnover in community schools is a problem. During the last year, I have worked with three assistant principals at Maningrida (and in fact three principals) in the planning stages for their VET program. It is imperative that Vocational Learning/VET programs in community schools be based on the needs of the community, as opposed to the expertise of the staff involved at the school, if the programs are to be sustainable.

The NTDE should note that the project is due to report its findings and recommendations on the delivery of vocational training in remote communities in April /May next year.

The review heard concerns from remote communities across the Territory in respect of the delivery of VET courses, which had a common theme. There was confusion at grassroots level on the number of registered training organisations (RTOs) delivering courses on the ground in communities. Those commonly cited were the Northern Territory University, Batchelor Institute, the Northern Territory Rural College, Centralian College and a small number of private providers. Examples were given of several RTOs being in the same community soliciting enrolments from the same student base for the same courses. In one community where the same course was being delivered at the same time by two RTOs they had to be located in the same building in separate rooms.

The point was made to us again and again that this was not only confusing for the community but inherently inefficient. It raised expectations for employment opportunities that were simply not there, damaged the confidence of adults who wanted to succeed, and lost students to VET.

Investigation by the review revealed that there is a fundamental flaw in the funding model and resource agreements between NTETA and the RTOs that is the root cause of this problem. The way in which the current model works is that NTETA signs an agreement with a major RTO, and in some cases more than one, for the delivery of a course. The agreements are negotiated on the basis of the delivery of blocks of annual hours curriculum (AHC) and are not designated for delivery to any particular community. Targets in the agreement are based on the number of students the RTO can enrol to complete the course and therefore utilise the AHC. If the targets are not met then the shortfall will be withdrawn from the next budget and in some cases, from the next progress payment to the RTO. This means that the pressure on the RTO to achieve the targets critical to their own budget—and survival—could see criteria such as entry requirements, chances of success and actual jobs on completion of the course, not being given the priority they should have. Instead of the AHC being the means to achieve the end of the student using skills provided by the training to get a job, it may become the end itself.

A better model would be for NTETA, in consultation with communities to

- identify the training requirements for the community
- make a realistic assessment of the number of students likely to complete the course
- determine the most appropriate mode of delivery
- assess the possible job opportunities available on completion of training.

In consulting with a community on its training requirements NTETA must directly involve the school principal as the senior representative of NTDE in the community. Every opportunity must be taken to reinforce the role of the school in helping its students to eventually access all available employment opportunities in the community. NTETA should then use this information as the basis for its negotiation with the RTOs.

NTETA moved to partially address this problem a number of years ago with the establishment of the Flexible Response Funding program. This minor component of the NTETA budget—$2.5m—also provides funding for blocks of AHC, but in a way that allows NTETA officers to negotiate directly with communities about their training requirements.

We therefore recommend that the current arrangements for NTETA funding of RTOs for VET be comprehensively reviewed. This review must take into account any potential impact on major RTOs such as the NTU. The NTU receives around $26 million in NTETA funding, part of which is a 36% loading on the base allocation of VET funding from NTETA, designated as an 'Ancillary Allowance'. This allowance is only available to the designated 'public providers'—NTU, Batchelor Institute, Northern Territory Rural College and Centralian College—for services provided to students that are not expected from a private provider. In addition to the 36% loading, the question of the level of on-costs levied by RTOs was raised with the review during community visits, with assertions that some providers were taking almost half of the funds provided as on-costs. We believe this is an issue that should be addressed in the review.

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As a transitional measure, NTETA should move to significantly expand the funds available to the Flexible Response Funding program from within its existing global budget, to deliver the training needs of remote communities in the manner suggested above. This transitional measure in itself would significantly alleviate the problems noted by the review.

Adult education

The terms of reference for the review placed the focus on educational outcomes for Indigenous children. As such, adult education is outside its scope. However, it is essential to acknowledge that educational levels across the whole community need to be addressed if communities are going to be able to grow and develop.

This review points to a generation of people who have come out of the school system over the past one or two decades with very poor levels of literacy and numeracy. Many of these people, now young adults, are seeking to make up for that gap in their education by enrolling in basic education courses. For others, formal education is seen as a way to obtain professional qualifications that can lead to a job and a satisfying career. There are many examples in the Territory of Indigenous people who have used the opportunities available to them to undertake tertiary studies leading to jobs in schools, clinics, councils and community organisations.

However, with the demise of the Northern Territory Open College (NTOC) in the early 1990s, the opportunities for on-site study diminished as adult educators were effectively lost to communities. The thrust of the National VET Agenda has also at times, had a deleterious effect upon communities in that there has been no recognition of the need for the types of the non-formal education that adult educators were previously able to provide. Today various public providers, together with a plethora of private providers, attempt in an uncoordinated way to address the educational needs in communities.

The review has spoken to many of the providers on the ground that are delivering a range of short courses in communities. As useful as these courses can be the providers are the first to acknowledge the shortcomings of not having a permanent presence in the community. They also made the point that their efforts would be greatly enhanced by a permanent adult education presence to help coordinate the training, prepare the ground and deliver follow-up.

In this regard the initiative by Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) to create a network of community study centres throughout the Territory is to be applauded and supported. NTDE should examine this initiative and ascertain the most effective way of supporting and utilising it to enhance educational opportunities in Indigenous communities. In more specific terms the review recommends that agencies, in particular THS and NTDE, look to the educational needs of their Indigenous employees and enter into agreements to work with providers such as BIITE and to provide the release time and support for those seeking to gain initial qualifications, to undertake inservice training, or to upgrade qualifications.

Good practice: Groote Eylandt GEMCO vocational education and training

GEMCO is running a training and employment program in conjunction with the NTU Remote Area Training Unit and assistance from DETYA at Groote Eylandt. The 'Employee Development Model' involves practical training and has an important element of literacy/numeracy at its core. Trainees begin the program at a base wage for a probationary period of six months which on successful completion becomes permanent employment. Trainees then progress through three stages of training with wages increasing incrementally on the completion of each stage. The program began two years ago with nine trainees. It now has twenty-one trainees with 10% having successfully progressed into Stage 3 and 30% currently in Stage 2. The rate of progression of individual trainees is largely dependent on the base level of literacy/numeracy skills of the trainees on induction. Trainees who were functionally illiterate on induction and who are still in the program are now producing pieces of good English composition which were seen by the review at Groote Eylandt. This program is a good model for those areas where similar opportunities to link with industry are available. Education is valuable for its own sake, but the value of linking education/ training to the incentive of guaranteed, satisfying employment is obvious. The continuing success of this program is a credit to the initiative and determination of the trainees, the commitment and skill of the NTU trainer, and the full-blooded support of GEMCO.

In the same context the 'Gumala Mirnuwarni Education Project' in Western Australia should be noted. This project, designed to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous youth was founded on a partnership between Woodside Energy Ltd, Dampier Salt, the Education Department of Western Australia, and the Polly Farmer Foundation in consultation with the Indigenous community at Roebourne. Twenty Year 8, 9,10 and four Year 11 and 12 students were accepted into the project in 1997, with further Year 8, 9, and10 students in 1998. Students were selected for the project on the basis of their potential, attitude, and commitment and the support of their families for them to succeed educationally. The project was based on the role-model truism that success breeds success. The VEGAS and ATAS programs have been used as a funding base through the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA). The project relies on a hands-on partnership between the students, their families, the education providers, governments, and the sponsors. Although the program has only been effectively running for eighteen months, it has already shown promising improvements in attendance, retention and academic outcomes.

Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program

The Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program (AITAP) is a federally funded program which aims to increase the number of Indigenous students who complete Year 12 and go on to tertiary education at universities or TAFE colleges. It does this by providing a network of support, encouragement and activities for students in partnership with ASSPA. In the Northern Territory there is clear evidence of the program's success and its usefulness for the students involved.

The review was able to attend the1999 AITAP Student Challenge at Casuarina Senior College attended by students from most NT colleges and high schools. Indigenous students were presented with a challenging and stimulating program of competitive activities in Problem Solving, Oral Presentations and Theatre Sports in a socially interactive environment. It was encouraging to witness the evidence of self-confidence and ability displayed by the students. Of equal importance was the opportunity for students to mix with others from across the Territory and speak to Indigenous students who were successfully completing or had completed tertiary studies.

The AITAP program is clearly accessed by urban students to a far greater degree than remote students, including those remote students who are attending urban-based institutions. A continuing effort needs to be made to encourage a greater involvement in the program by remote students.

Recommendations – Post-compulsory schooling

Vocational education and training

It is recommended that

90 the vocational education and training funding and resource agreements between NTETA and registered training organisations be comprehensively reviewed.

91 as a transitional measure, NTETA should move to significantly expand the funds available to the Flexible Response Funding program from within its existing global budgets.

92 in consulting with a community on its training requirements, that NTETA directly involves the school principal and the educational board if that has been established in that region/community.

Adult education

It is recommended that

93 there is a permanently based adult education provider presence at community level where appropriate. In this regard, the initiatives being taken by the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education should be supported.

AITAP

It is recommended that

94 AITAP is supported but a continuing effort made to encourage the greater involvement in the program by remote students, including those attending urban residential colleges and high schools.

Children with special needs

While the review did not specifically focus on the services of special education to remote communities, it is an area which requires a more in-depth investigation. Anecdotal evidence put to the review raised questions about the provision of student services and special education to Indigenous students. While it was beyond the scope of the review to examine these questions in detail, numerous examples were encountered which raise serious concerns. One setting in particular stands out.

> In a case study school situated in an isolated Indigenous community several hundred kilometres out of Katherine, the review encountered a CEC with twelve students who have intensive special needs. Many of these needs are not being met. There is no easy wheelchair access and few cement paths into key school buildings. One of the students is losing control of his neck muscles and as he is wheeled along the rocky ground, his head bounces awkwardly from side to side.
>
> The highly committed special education team continues to pour a lot of energy into caring, teaching the children and trying to get help to address the students' particular requirements. The special education team report that the organisational response has been, 'Well who owns the problem? You do'. Staff feel isolated and they told the review, 'If we can't fix it, we miss out – that's how the system works'.
>
> The principal says, 'I have a 0.5 special education teacher – this is not sustainable. We are only just getting there because of staff commitment. We need a full-time ESL and a full-time special education teacher'. After months of waiting, some equipment for the students such as a shower chair and lifting device arrive. Staff, parent and student frustration mounts however when the visiting physiotherapist and occupational therapist decide that one student would benefit from a standing frame so that the child's posture and breathing can be improved. Eleven weeks later the equipment has still not arrived nor is it expected in the very near future. Wheelchairs have either gone missing or taken six months to be finally delivered. Staff query why 'there is no position in the system that gives a person accountability for providing coordinated quality of service' and are told that 'due to staff shortages' the therapy teams have to 'prioritise town' rather than remote communities.
>
> Just prior to the review visit, a student was flown back to the community after a brief period of respite care in Katherine without his fold-up wheelchair. The special education teacher who met the medical services plane at the airport was told that since they could not fit the wheelchair on the aircraft the hefty thirteen-year-old wheelchair-dependent young man suffering from muscular dystrophy 'would be alright for a few days'. The slightly built teacher is left to struggle with the young man with the help of other students and an angry principal, who has been called in to help. This was an unnecessarily distressing and humiliating incident for the student, his family and staff, and indicates an entirely unacceptable attitudinal approach. The student's wheelchair arrived three days later. It hardly needs to be said that the student should have remained in respite care until he and his wheelchair were able to travel together. (Case Study 39)

The PAC Report suggests that there are at least 600 students enrolled in remote Indigenous schools who require special education assistance. The review found no evidence to question the validity of this estimate.

Currently, assistance is provided by departmental therapy teams that are based in urban areas. The teams not only have responsibility for the provision of services to remote communities, but to the urban centres as well. The team comprises an occupational therapist, speech pathologist and a physiotherapist. As it works in practice, the issues of time, distance, and language barriers cannot be taken into account. An example was provided regarding a typical visit to a remote community. By the time members of the team travelled out to the community and did extensive work with the classroom teacher, there was little or no time to work with the family of the child with the special needs. It is imperative that the classroom teacher receive assistance, advice and support, because of the high turnover of staff in remote community schools. However, it would be more effective for the team to spend time with the family of the student, educating them on strategies to assist as ultimately, it is the family who continue to have the responsibility. In addition, there is no mechanism for the information to be passed on should the school have a complete turnover of staff.

The lack of qual ed interpreters is an issue, particularly at the time of assessment. An added difficulty is when the therapists attempt to ask the parents for an input or to communicate complex concepts. Quite often family members also have limited English, and this results not only in a lack of information, but sometimes a complete misunderstanding of information provided. The current situation is that health workers and assistant teachers are often called on to interpret, but this in itself can be disastrous if the person who is actually interpreting does not understand the ethics of interpreting or the conceptual issues being canvassed.

The very high rates of hearing impairment for Indigenous students have been documented elsewhere. Indigenous children in urban classrooms may have hearing loss which goes undetected. There is evidence that in urban classrooms where Indigenous children are identified as having behaviour problems a high proportion of these children have hearing loss (Howard 1995). Schools and students' families need a systematic program of support from Student Services to address this risk, and to ensure appropriate educational strategies are made available to the children.

The review is aware that the Northern Territory Department of Education is currently implementing a range of recommendations from the 1998 'Schools ... Our Focus' Education review. The 'Schools ... Our Focus' Fact Sheet 11 indicates that the department is planning to undertake a review of Student Services 'to identify strategies which could enhance student outcomes'.

It is our strong recommendation that the Student Services review examine the provision of student services and special education to Indigenous students in the Northern Territory, as a specific term of reference.

Questions were raised about the equity of provision of student services programs for students in remote locations. It is expected that this issue would be addressed as part of the impending review.

Recommendations – Students with special needs

It is recommended that the impending Student Services Review

95 examines the provision of student services and special education to Indigenous students in the Northern Territory, as a specific term of reference.

96 considers equity of service provision for students with special needs.

97 makes recommendations on the facilities required and costs involved to ensure all schools are catering for hearing impairment and levels of physical disability in Indigenous students as design requirements.

Language and literacy acquisition

The review found in all communities that improved English speaking and literacy development was a key aspiration for Indigenous parents, students and community members.

Many Indigenous people shared their concern that today's students have fewer and less well-developed literacy skills than the generation before them. Older Indigenous people voiced their deep concerns for the next generation, 'These young blokes coming out of school, you ask them to read, they can't. We ask – where are these kids going to go? What jobs will they get? They don't learn to write. They just learn how to run around'. (Case Study 9). Another parent was more insistent that things had definitely deteriorated

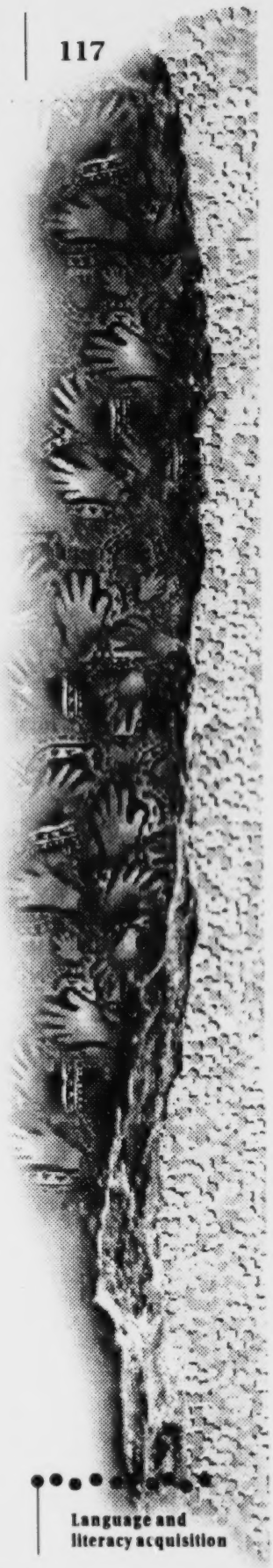
> I was educated in the 70's. I got a better education than my daughter here. I know how to read and write and talk English. I can talk to you, to anybody, to Land Council. I don't want more excuses that we are blackfellas. So the education department I reckon is going backward and is always coming up with excuses. ... Maybe you don't want us to be educated properly because you don't want us to do your jobs. Educate us properly so that we can come back and be book keepers, and things like that, run this place...We're worried now. It is getting worse. This is the first time in 20 years that someone has come and talked to us straight about what is going on in schools. We are wasting time sending our kids to your white schools. Teach us properly, to speak like you. I don't savvy why you don't. (Case Study 32)

A local government report summarising interviews with the Kardu Numida Town Council (Wadeye) cites the verdict of council members on the literacy and numeracy levels of the community as follows

> 40-60 years of age – good literacy skills, fair numeracy skills.
> 25-40 years of age – poor literacy skills, poor numeracy skills.
> Under 25 years of age – nil literacy skills, nil numeracy skills.
> (Kardu-Numida 1998: 8)

A submission from the Aboriginal Economic Development Advisory Committee (AEDAC) repeated the concern

> AEDAC members are left wondering why their generation, in the main, generally achieved English literacy in the school system of the time, as well as retaining their language(s) and culture, yet the current generation are not gaining literacy in English. (Submission to review)



The sweep of sociocultural and demographic changes described in the introduction, combined with poor health, is having an impact on educational outcomes. Anthropologist Gerry Schwab describes the impact of modernity in Arnhem Land in the following way

> dramatic social change has swept through the region and modern technologies, such as telephones, fax machines, computers, the internet, video tapes, aeroplanes and four-wheel-drive vehicles have delivered options and pressures never imagined a generation ago. (Schwab 1998: 1)

Without doubt, the Standard Australian English oracy and literacy of the majority of Indigenous students in remote and to a lesser extent urban schools are simply not at a level that enables full participation in further education, training or employment. A submission from Normandy NFM Limited described the preferential employment program in place to take on local Indigenous employees. Originally Normandy set an entry requirement of Grade 10 literacy and numeracy for employment with the company. But 'at a meeting of teachers in Alice Springs, the consensus of the 50 or so teachers present was that if Normandy ... set (this) hurdle requirement, there would be no eligible Indigenous students at the time and this would be the most likely situation for the foreseeable future'. (Submission to review). Consequently, Normandy avoided setting any such level in its recruitment but found the recruits struggle with the basic literacy and numeracy required for compliance with statutory occupational health and safety requirements—for example, reading and comprehending signage or plant and equipment operating instructions. The company commented, 'as work is so central to economic and social participation in mainstream Australian culture, resolving the literacy and numeracy literacy deficit is crucial to the declared aspirations of Indigenous people'. (ibid)

The issue was raised again and again. The review was told that with the introduction of competency-based classification structures with Aboriginal health worker and local government employment streams that 'in the age group 18-35, there are too many people who do not have adequate numeracy/literacy skills to gain entry even at Certificate 2 level'. (Submission to review). Batchelor Institute is the largest provider of tertiary education to adult Indigenous people in Australia. The single greatest problem faced by institutions such as Batchelor in providing professional qualifications to Indigenous people is the very low levels of prior academic achievement students have on entry to the tertiary sector. The Department of Transport and Works, in their submission to the review, stated that one of their corporate goals was to increase the level of Indigenous involvement in the construction industry by

- contracting with Indigenous enterprise
- encouraging Indigenous employment on government projects
- creating an environment which supports the development of Indigenous enterprise.

In practice only about 10% of government infrastructure funding on Indigenous land actually goes to Indigenous enterprise, arising in the main from an overall lack of construction skills. Attempts to raise these skills through training on government projects have encountered three fundamental obstacles

- minimum numeracy and literacy requirements not being met
- poor awareness of the nature of a project with specific time cost and quality goals
- no motivation to participate in training programs.

The reasons for poor literacy and numeracy are complex. It can be said that almost every child in remote schools and many urban Indigenous children are ESL students and that a great number have ear disease and persistent hearing disabilities. It can also be said that no child learns literacy 'naturally', outside of a structured induction process. The essential pedagogic requirements for literacy are not as clear, but involve a transformation in the child's ability to decipher the relationship between sounds and their representation as marks on a page, which is then shaped into meaning. In many urban households, children absorb this shaping process with saturated learning between school, home and wider environment. As one informant noted, 'In mainstream schools it doesn't matter too precisely how teachers go about teaching literacy and numeracy – it will more or less work. In remote schools, teachers come in without acknowledging what it is they take for granted'.

Bilingual education

The review was established in the same timeframe as the Northern Territory Government's announcement of its 1998 decision to phase out specific purpose funding for bilingual education,[50] a statement which attracted much high-level media attention, both locally and nationally. Not surprisingly, the controversy impacted severely on the review, as many people in the communities affected, and those supporting them, wanted to talk about nothing else. The announcement quite simply polarised what may otherwise have been more equivocal positions.[51]

[50] This means that the staffing formula for bilingual schools – which enabled such schools to have extra staff in the positions of Teacher-Linguist, Literature Production Supervisor, Literacy Workers and Assistant Teachers – will no longer apply after 1999 in the terms set out in the original decision. However, as a commitment was made that all Indigenous staff would retain their employment, the current Assistant Teacher staff allocation is expected to be maintained at bilingual levels. Full implementation details are being negotiated with schools by a separate departmental consultation group.

[51] For example, a significant Indigenous organisation made a submission to the PAC in 1995 arguing that bilingual education should take a second place to English acquisition, yet provided a submission to this inquiry arguing the reverse. Whilst acknowledging that the composition of the organisation in question has changed in the interim, this review sees the disparity in responses as an understandable artefact of the way the decision was handled, and in particular, of the total absence of prior consultation.

The review received many written submissions and verbal representations on the issue. With few exceptions, these submissions supported retention of the bilingual program. Reasons advanced ranged from better literacy outcomes to prevention of genocide. By far the greatest emphasis in arguments favouring the program's retention was on its value in reinforcing and strengthening Indigenous identity in all its forms. Indigenous teachers, parents and students themselves all put to the review the importance of English acquisition, but not at the expense of their own culture and language. These sentiments were often expressed using the very familiar expression of wanting 'both ways' or 'two-way' learning. It is important to note that the concept of 'two-way' learning does not necessarily imply support for a particular model of bilingual education, or for bilingual education as it is currently recognised at all. Much of the Indigenous support for 'two-way' learning is based on an intense desire to maintain and enrich unique Indigenous cultures and languages, and not on any linguistic theory of facilitating an easier transfer to English.

A trained Indigenous teacher, who, after suffering teaching burn-out, is working part time as a liaison officer at a bilingual school, described his son's achievements with some pride.

> Bilingual is not to blame. My son was taught here for two years in this bilingual school. Then in high school in 97 and 98, now he is at (a residential college), he got a B in maths. I think that bilingual is not bad for education, but not coming to school is bad for education. If they are not coming to school, they can't read or write. If you are saying Indigenous kids are not doing good, is it because they are bilingual? If you look at Balanda kids, some of them have problems reading and writing. When I was a student at – High School, I saw kids who could speak, but not read or write. And then I knew it wasn't just Indigenous kids who couldn't read or write. (Case Study 24)

A thousand kilometers away, in another community affected by the decision, Indigenous community members reminded the review that these were Australian languages that were under threat.

> Aboriginal language is Australian. English, French, is foreign, from overseas. Or Chinese. If their parents come from overseas and are in Australia, they can go back to that country and learn it again, or books. If it is an Aboriginal language it is very hard. It is only in human beings. (Case Study 9)

The review noted arguments in the literature and from contributors supporting the belief that initial instruction in the mother tongue—that is, in the language in which children spontaneously think and talk—assists the acquisition of second language oracy and literacy, in particular aiding comprehension and topic recognition. We also noted persuasive evidence that a real educational benefit from the use of vernacular in classrooms was the learning advantage gained by the large number of students with impaired hearing. A teacher in a bush school reported the results of a recent ear examination of a Year 4 class in which over 90% of the students were found to have **no eardrums**. These students were assisted in their comprehension not just by amplification, but by the context of non-aural clues available to them from Indigenous teachers speaking in their own language. Much less convincing were advocate's claims that early exposure to oral English jeopardised vernacular uptake amongst Indigenous students and confuses their overall learning. It seems to the review that the true aim of bilingual education is the cultivation of proficiency in both languages.

Bilingual implementation – a brief overview

The bilingual program was begun in schools in the Northern Territory in 1973. Government and bureaucratic proponents of the program at the time cited improved school attendance and better outcomes in English literacy and numeracy among the primary aims and anticipated benefits. Indigenous support always centred on what was seen as the first real recognition by Government of the value of Indigenous language, culture and law. In other words, while there was common support for the program, it came from different perspectives. In many quarters these different perspectives have not changed in more than twenty-five years.

The period up to 1977 was one of intense enthusiasm with a too rapid expansion outstripping available resources. There were attempts made to end the program in 1976, successfully resisted by adherents on the ground. This was followed by a period of consolidation between 1978 and 1986 and a largely caretaker period since, during which a number of former assistant teachers gained their teaching qualifications from Batchelor College. At the time of the decision to phase out special-purpose funding for bilingual schools, there were twenty schools delivering formally accredited bilingual programs in various forms across the NT.

The bilingual program originally adopted in the NT is known as the 'staircase model'. This delivers a 95:5 mix of vernacular oracy and literacy and limited English oracy in preschool, moving in stages to 20:80 vernacular and SAE oracy and literacy by Year 7. The model is based on the 'interdependency principle' pre-eminently espoused by James Cummins, a Canadian language researcher (Cummins 1981; Cummins 1986; cf. Devlin 1995; Devlin 1997). This principle holds that cognitive skills of children gained when taught in their first language will transfer readily to a second language, in this case English. It presumes that literacy must be first taught in the first language, and then, at a time when academic proficiency has been reached, transfer to literacy in the second or foreign language can commence.

This model is still used in some schools, but with an ad hoc move in most towards a 50:50 model—as used in a more purposeful way at Yipirinya School, Alice Springs. One reason for the move toward a 50:50 model which was brought to the attention of the review was a desire in some communities to expose children to a greater degree of SAE in the early years of their schooling.[32] The reality in classrooms in many schools up to the present day is that the 'staircase model' became what one experienced educator referred to as the 'Zorro model.' The proportions of languages used, and quality of instruction delivered, zigzag widely from year to year, depending on the experience and skills of the teachers available at any one time, and the school leadership support for bilingual education. Examination of the detailed assessment documents made available, shows that in some schools the program was bedeviled by high staff turnover, lack of equipment and resources, and on occasion staff and principals who were unsupportive or actively hostile to the program.

[32] Harris and Devlin have postulated a number of credible reasons for the ad hoc move away from the stair case model in a pre-publication paper provided to the review (Harris & Devlin 1999).

Research in the United States in a number of 'best practice' bilingual schools show that a common factor across successful bilingual schools requires that the teachers delivering the program are themselves competent in both the languages of instruction.[13] Another common thread in the research is that when one or both of the languages used in classrooms are not functioning effectively, overall language acquisition outcomes are negatively affected. While both of these scenarios are found in Northern Territory classrooms, the evidence also shows that from the outset the program was beset with difficulties in both recruiting and retaining the necessary specialist skills essential in a 'best practice' bilingual program.

Problems also occurred in the provision of appropriate materials and equipment. The problems were obviously exacerbated by the high turnover of staff—which, even though less dramatic in bilingual than other remote areas schools, remained a significant problem. Teachers in bilingual schools usually begin their teaching experience with no knowledge of the local languages at all. Few have specialist linguistic or ESL training, or indeed any training or experience to effectively teach classes of multilingual non-Standard Australian English speaking children.

Bilingual appraisals

Until 1988 assessment of most bilingual schools was carried out externally, with one-on-one assessment of children using standard tests. The results were benchmarked against a group of non-bilingual schools for cross-referencing. Careful attention was paid to levels of competency in English literacy and numeracy. Reference to the detailed documentation—made available and supported with oral evidence by the qualified assessor—**clearly shows positive outcomes compared with benchmark non-bilingual schools**. A random example from the mass of evaluation data kept by the assessor, from an Arnhem Land school from May 1981, showed that the bilingual school involved 'had higher percentages of students who mastered the tests than the reference group in all the four tasks[14] in English'.

[13] For a comprehensive summary of the state of American research, see Diane August and Kenji Hakuta's *Improving Schooling for Language-Minority Children. A Research Agenda* (August & Hakuta 1998). James Crawford's report *Best Evidence: Research Foundations of the Bilingual Education Act* is also useful from a policy analysis perspective (Crawford 1997).

[14] Task one was reading comprehension; task two was multiple choice reading comprehension; task three was written production; and task four was oral production.

Since 1988, the assessment of bilingual schools has been one of 'moderated self-appraisal'. In his submission to the review, Brian Devlin pointed out that a critical criterion in the post-1988 assessment had rarely been carried out.

> As has been previously pointed out (Devlin, 1995), it is of concern to note that an assurance which was given to the Minister almost a decade ago has not generally been honoured. The Minister was told that all school appraisal reports on bilingual programs would include centrally administered test data obtained under the auspices of the Primary Assessment Program (later called the Multilevel Assessment Program). The criteria against which the schools with bilingual programs would be appraised were set out in a Ministerial briefing paper dated 31 July 1990.
>
> > *The moderation process involved the Departmental officers applying their knowledge of Departmental policies and operational practices, and the Aboriginal representatives applying their knowledge of Aboriginal community expectations and practices, to ensure that the school report was a valid representation of the activities of the school program. This involved checking the Student Progress section of the reports to ensure that results from the Primary Assessment Program (PAP) were included.*
>
> The new appraisal process was welcomed by Aboriginal schools as an appropriate and creditable way of conducting evaluation because it directly involved local Aboriginal teachers, community members, and senior departmental officers experienced in both general administration and curriculum development in Aboriginal schools.
>
> Nevertheless, and this is a crucial point, few school appraisal reports included any comparative data based on the results obtained by students in the annual PAP or MAP tests. This is not likely to have been the result of bad faith on the part of any senior departmental officials. Quite possibly, the last component of the promise to the Minister was simply forgotten, although it is more likely that the schools themselves and/or appraisal teams decided not to include this qualitative data. However the lapse is interpreted, the consequence of the Minister having been given a false assurance is that most schools with bilingual programs are now left vulnerable: unable to demonstrate superior performance compared to non-bilingual schools, even where this may have been the case.

The lack of a reliable system-wide database to measure outcomes is by no means a problem confined to bilingual schools. In fact bilingual schools are the only Indigenous schools that have had systemic assessment at all, albeit flawed.

Indigenous staff and bilingual realities

The first and immediately obvious achievement of the bilingual program was to lift the community standing and self-esteem of Indigenous staff in schools. It provided the first real opportunity for Indigenous people to determine the type and style of education they wanted for their children. Local Indigenous staff became teachers in the real sense of the word. It is fair to say that bilingual schools have acted as the crucible for Indigenous teacher training and the increasing success of employing local Indigenous people to staff bush schools. This is an enduring legacy of bilingual education and arguably its greatest achievement.

This success is evidenced by the fact that in the mid to late 1980s, up to 80% of students in the education faculty of the former Batchelor College were from bilingual schools and the majority of Indigenous teachers in senior teacher training positions were from bilingual schools. Even now, of the 168 Batchelor students in Teacher Education—including fifty in Early Childhood—approximately 50% come from bilingual schools although they comprise only about 20% of all Indigenous schools.[35]

Indigenous staff who now fear their schools will become 'English only,' told the review 'more in sorrow than anger', that they saw no place for themselves in such an environment and would quit the schools. As IAD observed

> What role will there really be for Indigenous staff, professional and para-professional in English only schools? The scenario could be a predictable stream of young non-Indigenous staff passing through, first year out teachers with little ESL training and limited appropriate experience. (Submission to review)

It is imperative that the NTDE acknowledges the reality of widespread informal bilingual practices and uses it effectively by providing the necessary research and expert educational and linguistic resources to ensure a managed rather than fortuitous educational outcome.

Since the introduction of bilingual education in the 1970s, the NTDE has correctly pursued a program of recruiting local Indigenous staff for bush schools, which is the most valuable long-term answer to the unacceptably high level of non-local staff turnover. With the constantly growing proportion of local Indigenous staff in schools, the reality in many classrooms in the Northern Territory is a local Indigenous teacher providing instruction in a natural mix of vernacular and English. In an important sense most bush schools with local staff are, to varying degrees, bilingual schools. As a result of the increasing success of local recruitment, the widespread use of living Australian languages as well as English is rapidly becoming the norm in Indigenous classrooms across the Northern Territory.

On their own, non-urban Indigenous teachers, and even some urban teachers, are not likely to talk to their students in Standard Australian English when this stands in the way of good communication. In other cases, students and the assistant teacher will use vernacular most of the time, while the teacher will use a simplified version of English. **As the Indigenous principal of one such school told the review, 'This is not a bilingual school ... officially.'**

Policy implications

The naturally increasing use of vernacular in schools and the ad hoc changes already made within the bilingual program mean that from the perspective of appropriate pedagogy many Indigenous schools in the NT are flying blind. Concern has been raised by Harris and Devlin about the lack of any educational research into the move away from the 'staircase model' in bilingual schools to a 50:50 model (Harris & Devlin 1999). Other advocates claim that there was no educational rationale for the original transfer model, other than a post-hoc turn to Cummins. This was used to justify an ideologically-driven insistence that transfer to English literacy can only take place once academic competence in vernacular literacy is acquired. (cf. Gray undated)

[35] Source: Batchelor Institute figures.

The transfer model has sufficient question marks surrounding it for the review to recommend that it undergo complete reappraisal to determine the most appropriate approach. As part of this reappraisal, a comprehensive analysis is required of what is either in place or available to increase the amount standard English oracy and explicit exposure to the literate language features, while supporting vernacular language development. This assessment is critical to all attempts to address the quality and effectiveness of English literacy teaching for all Indigenous students, and is not a matter of bilingual or not bilingual. **The 'bilingual or not' debate conceals and distorts the generic concerns that are in need of urgent analysis.**

Immediate research must be initiated by the department in cooperation with NTU and Batchelor Institute, and involving inhouse linguistic expertise, into the current use of vernacular in NT classrooms in all its forms—not just in bilingual schools—and the appropriate pedagogy to effectively support such learning environments.

Two-way learning

The review believes that the whole question of 'bilingual education' in respect of the most effective pedagogy for teaching Indigenous students has become a major red herring. The term itself no longer reflects what is happening in classrooms, and is so divergently interpreted and misunderstood that it should no longer be used. A more accurate and appropriate description would be 'two-way learning', a term which removes the current tendency to see learning in the vernacular and in English as being somehow in competition. The evidence is that competency in one tends to be reflected in competency in the other,[35] and in any case, vernacular instruction is taking place regardless.

The teaching framework adopted to support 'two-way learning' needs to be flexible enough to incorporate in a soundly based educational program the individual situations and requirements of different communities. A 'one-size fits all' approach is doomed to fail and there has been enough failure already.[37] At the same time the program must be strongly outcomes based with appropriate assessment provided which includes critical reference to SAE oracy, literacy and numeracy. It is essential that intellectual effort go toward developing valid ESL/EFL MAP tests that provide comparable longitudinal data.

The NTDE should support 'two-way learning' programs in schools where the local community wants such a program, providing assessment demonstrates the essential elements for its educationally effective delivery are in place or will be put in place. This assessment and any ongoing assessment must be dispassionate, rigorous and unequivocally focused on agreed outcomes. The failure to implement the inclusion of Standard Australian English oracy, literacy and numeracy outcomes noted by the review must not be allowed to occur again.

[35] The review came across teachers who are reluctant to over-emphasise English language and literacy acquisition, fearing its impact on the uptake of vernacular languages. This fear should be put to rest by linguistic research which highlights the versatility and resilience of language speakers when exposed to quality language instruction. Additional research suggests that both the number of vernacular speakers, and the number of vernacular languages in operation in a particular community, combined with proximity to English-dominant urban centres, are far more significant variables affecting vernacular language decline than school-based English instruction (cf. Hoogenraad 1993: 47). Ultimately, these are chicken-egg arguments that distract attention from what is required to meet the aims of school-based instruction that has as a key aim proficiency in English literacy and numeracy together with active pursuit of cultural priorities—or 'two-way learning'—in accordance with the wishes of Indigenous people.

[37] 'Flexibility' does not entitle a lessening of standards nor should it obscure the fact that similar educational situations exist in the majority of Indigenous communities, including creole-speaking areas and town camps in Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine and Tennant Creek.

It should be noted that the same problems that impeded the effectiveness of bilingual education must be addressed if 'two-way learning' is to succeed. **It cannot be stated too strongly that Indigenous education requires appropriate levels of human and physical resourcing whether it is bilingual or not.** The immediate challenge will be ensuring a supply of suitably experienced Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff and the establishment of clear approaches within schools that establish the 'how' of enabling students to maintain their cultural practices and languages while ensuring that oracy, literacy, numeracy and other competencies are attained.

To this end, the NTDE should, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, develop and publish a concise and easily readable policy document on 'two-way learning' for the Northern Territory, similar to the policy document produced by the Kimberly Catholic Education Office. This document would provide clear direction for all engaged in the process in those communities that wish to support such a program in their schools. The document should clearly state that the overriding objective of 'two-way learning' is to improve outcomes in the broadest sense for Indigenous students.

The critical need for such a document was evidenced in the wide range of responses—particularly from teachers—received by the review during school visits on the need for directional clarity. As one contributor has written:

> When there is no clear guiding philosophy to inform our practice, we will tend to be unsure of what it is we are supposed to be developing in our students, and thus the focus of our efforts will straight away turn to resource development (which) . . . is generally uncontroversial and creates the impression of supporting the main educational enterprise. But what is this enterprise? Do those of us involved in Indigenous education truly have a clear idea of what it is we are supposed to be doing? (Case Study 9)

An example of how such issues are dealt with in the Catholic Education Office policy document follows.

> **The Two-Way Learning Philosophy**
> The philosophy presented here is one of acknowledging the culture of both the home and the school. It reinforces the teaching–learning relationship between the older and younger members of the community as well as that of teacher and student. It promotes flexibility in school structures to enable input from the local community and recognizes the importance of traditional Indigenous languages in the curriculum where the local community wants this.
>
> **The Place of English in the School**
> The learning of Standard Australian English is seen as a crucial element of the schooling process. This will equip students with the tools to participate in the wider Australian community and give them greater control over their lives by enabling them to undertake further studies if they wish.
>
> **Including Indigenous Languages in the School**
> The teaching of Indigenous Languages and culture is an affirmation of the value of these for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous society. This is often the most visible form of a Two-Way Learning policy. The school where an Indigenous language is taught must work together with the community in planning and implementing such a program.

One of the basic concepts of bilingual education is that the language and culture of the student are to be valued within the school just as the introduced language and culture are to be valued. In the Indigenous education context in Australia this means that the child's language and culture will be valued by the school as will be the English language and its attendant Western culture. This concept is as valid today as it was when bilingual education programs were first introduced to the Northern Territory. However, philosophy and concepts alone are not enough for good educational outcomes. Delivery, the other essential element, must be based on competent pedagogy and sound teaching practices. **It is here that in some classrooms in the Northern Territory bilingual education has failed, and failed badly.** In any educational program there are a set of minimum essential factors that must be present for good teaching practice. And when the complexities of a bilingual program are added, there are further factors in respect of skills that must also be present. Too often in the Northern Territory those essentials and the skills necessary for good practice have been lacking. The issue of resources and support should also not be ignored. The failure to adequately support and resource the bilingual program is a further reason why, in some areas, there has been a failure. It also has to be said that even with the best will in the world there are sometimes circumstances beyond the control of an education system that mitigate against the delivery within a reasonable timeframe of the factors that are necessary to success. Nonetheless, even in such circumstances there should be no resiling from the application of an educationally rigorous evaluation and assessment of the program. To do so is a betrayal, in the long term, of the aspirations of all involved. If it is seen that for whatever combination of factors the program cannot be effectively delivered, it should be replaced by a program that can deliver outcomes of value to the participants.

There are two essential elements for an educational program to be successful. The soundness of its basic concepts and philosophy, and the effectiveness of its delivery. In any evaluation of the program both elements must be considered and this is as true of a bilingual education program as it is for any other educational program.

Second language learning (or ESL)

The Northern Territory has 59% of Australia's Indigenous language speakers—that is, the majority of Australian languages are spoken in the Northern Territory. Western Australia has the next highest proportion at 19%.[*] It follows that for a significant percentage of Indigenous students, Standard Australian English (SAE) is not the medium of everyday speech at home or play. **The NT should be leading Australia in policy development and pedagogy for the use of original Australian languages in education.** In a useful research paper based on ABS data 'Spoken English Proficiency of Northern Territory Aboriginal People,' Gerry McCue, Policy Analyst OAD, notes that

> Within the Northern Territory, only around 30% of Aboriginal people used English as a first language. The corresponding figure for non-Aboriginal Territorians is close to 90%. It is noteworthy that the corresponding figure for Aboriginal people throughout the rest of Australia is around 80%. ... around 4% of Aboriginal people in the East Arnhem region use English as a first language, which effectively relegates English to the position of being a minor language for Aboriginal people in that region. It is probable that this situation is not duplicated outside the Territory.

[*] Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1996.

The single most important site for children in particular for exposure to Standard Australian English is the school. In many bush communities large and small, the school contains the largest number of SAE speakers in the whole community.[13] The more rapid acquisition of SAE by non-English speaking students elsewhere in Australia by 'immersion' in English language and Western culture outside the school does not happen in remote Indigenous communities. In the words of one contributor to the review, 'One teacher with ten to twenty-five students cannot immerse the students in English!' This means that for acquisition of SAE for many Indigenous students in remote communities, the time they spend and what they learn at school becomes far more critical.

It was pointed out to the review by linguists that English and Australian languages, including the creoles, are as different as languages can be, in terms of their sound systems, semantics—meaning systems, grammatical systems, and text structures. As a consequence, English is very difficult to learn well for a speaker of an Indigenous Australian language, and conversely, an Indigenous Australian language is very difficult to learn well for a speaker of English. This complexity requires an informed educational response so that teachers do not grapple with such large contradictions anew and in isolation.

Good practice: ESL at Clyde Fenton Primary School

The school currently operates two very successful multi-age ESL classes. The teaching and learning programs in the classes are effective as a result of a number of contributing factors including the committed ASSPA, AIEW, HLO and teachers of excellence. More importantly, the principal's whole-school strategic approach which is being taken to address regular attendees who are not achieving academically is clearly the differentiating ingredient which produces some success.

There is widespread concern, most of it from Indigenous informants, on the need to expose students to a higher level of spoken Standard Australian English as soon as possible.

> We (older men) were only taught in English. Our Warlpiri was quality. There was no video, no TV. Now the kids learn bad English and bad Warlpiri. If we have both languages in this school, it needs to be both ways, from the start. Both ways, quality English. (Case Study 9)

This is not just an issue for bilingual schools. As an Indigenous assistant teacher from a non-bilingual school put it:

> I don't think they should be teaching just language or just English all the way through but 50:50, both ways, in early childhood. I do it a little already, when I see the kids are not understanding in English, or my translating might not be good enough. The government shouldn't knock out bilingual but should change it, make it both ways equal, and move to English only in upper Primary. Then our children can go ahead in other subjects. (Case Study 27)

[13] Television and videos are widely used in communities and could be argued to increase the ambit of English language exposure beyond the school. However, the passivity of this exposure fails to provide the interaction needed to stimulate language acquisition, and thus the school remains the pre-eminent site of SAE instruction.

This was reiterated by the Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory, who observed in their submission that

> Language development is founded in oracy. It is critical that young children are exposed to good models of standard Australian English from their early childhood years, the time when they undergo their most rapid language development. This is particularly critical for children who do not normally hear English spoken at home or in the community and whose language learning is made more difficult by hearing loss as a result of the high incidence of otitis media. Many Indigenous youngsters do not have regular contact with standard Australian English in those critical early years.

As noted, the review received statements of strong support from teachers across the Territory for the effectiveness of the ESL for Indigenous-Language-Speaking Students (ESL ILSS) program and the need for it to go beyond the single year currently provided. The program has been well received, among other things because it gives schools extra personnel and thus improves the staff:student ratios. As discussed earlier in this report, the program needs to be extended across all years up to Year 7 and should also be considered in secondary schooling. This is in recognition of the profound gaps between Indigenous and other Territory students and the need for intensive remedial work to ensure the next generation are not further disadvantaged. **Such measures are not substitutes for structured ESL programs which need to be a feature of the everyday teacher programming in all classrooms containing Indigenous students.**

Recommendations relating to the training requirements for ESL are contained in the Staffing chapter, under Ongoing Professional Renewal.

Language and cultural teaching

The NTBOS aims to have every school in the Northern Territory offering Australian Indigenous Studies as described in its policy. Australia has an Indigenous history and Indigenous viewpoints, perceptions and expectations on social, cultural and historical matters. It is essential that these are reflected in the curricula, teaching and administration of schools.

This is particularly significant given that 1996 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples comprise 28.5% of the Northern Territory population. Throughout all schools in the Northern Territory in 1998, Indigenous students comprised 35.2% of the total number of students, compared with 5.1% for the next closest State, Western Australia. The national average is 3.2%.

The Northern Territory has one of the most abundant sources of material on the depth and richness of Indigenous culture and language, both contemporary and historical, in Australia. **We should be at the leading edge in the production of educational curriculum material in this area, but we are not.** Currently, the Northern Territory School of Languages offers no Indigenous language courses. The NTDE has a policy of support for Indigenous languages that suffers from vague ambition. All students are meant to have the opportunity to study Australian Indigenous languages 'where possible.' How this is to be done, with what resources, time allocation and curriculum materials, is left unspecified. Clarity is required into how the program is to work in schools, alongside clear indications that the program is understood and supported at higher levels (see also Henderson 1994).

It is the policy of the NT Board of Studies (NTBOS) that all students enrolled in Northern Territory schools should have the opportunity to undertake Australian Indigenous Studies. This policy has been developed in response to several significant national goals and recommendations. Such an approach provides all students with an understanding and respect for Indigenous traditional and contemporary heritage and cultures.

This is in contrast to policy material available from the New South Wales Board of Studies—to cite just one source. This outstanding material naturally concentrates on issues particularly—but not exclusively—relevant to NSW. It is imperative that the Northern Territory produces material of similar quality relevant to the Territory, which would add value to the understanding by students everywhere of the value of our unique Indigenous cultures and languages and their interaction with Western culture. These should then be elaborated at the school level, covering the following issues:

- community involvement and control
- the goal of the program
- the role, scope and sequence of the language programs
- the teaching and learning methodologies to be used
- evaluation processes.

Opportunities to achieve economies of scale by drawing on existing good practice should also be pursued. For instance, the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) currently delivers the Arrernte language program to a small number of government schools in Alice Springs, which the review found was well regarded in those schools which had it in place. Options for extending the IAD Languages in Schools Program should be explored.

Recommendations – Two-way learning

It is recommended that:

98 NTDE supports 'two-way learning' programs in schools where the local community wants such a program, and assessment demonstrating the essential elements for its effective delivery are in place.

99 the initial assessment, and any ongoing assessment, must be dispassionate, rigorous and unequivocally focused on agreed outcomes.

100 NTDE issues a formal policy document which clearly states the NTDE policy of support for 'two-way learning', affirming the value of Indigenous language and culture and highlighting the importance of learning of Standard Australian English oracy and literacy as a crucial element of the schooling process.

101 the teaching framework adopted to support 'two-way learning' needs to be flexible enough to incorporate in a soundly based educational program the individual situations and requirements of different communities.

102 NTDE urgently commissions high-level research into the use of vernacular in Indigenous schools to develop the most appropriate pedagogy to support effective learning in this environment. A comprehensive analysis as part of this research must establish what is required to ensure effective exposure to Standard Australian English oracy and literacy takes place, while supporting vernacular language development. The research undertaken must be focused on improving outcomes.

Second language learning
It is recommended that

103 NTDE explores all possible avenues of increasing the exposure of Indigenous students to spoken Standard Australian English.

104 as an immediate measure, NTDE with DETYA progressively extend the ESL ILSS program across all primary years.

105 urgent priority is given to develop strategies to improve the unacceptably low attendance of enrolled ESL ILSS students.

Language teaching
It is recommended that

106 Indigenous viewpoints, perceptions and expectations about social, cultural and historical matters are reflected in the curricula, teaching and administration of all NT schools.

107 NTDE examines options for producing high-quality curriculum material, which would add to the understanding by students everywhere of the value of our unique Indigenous cultures and languages and their interaction with Western culture.

108 options for extending the IAD Languages in Schools Program are explored.

Literacy and numeracy

Interviews with local educational experts, case studies, and literature analysis highlighted the absence of well-defined and longitudinally tested pathways for the development of oracy, literacy and numeracy competence for Indigenous students. Instead, it seems that the focus within government administration has been on the production of programs and materials for use in schools—curricula, courses, learning resources. Many of these translate, reframe or simplify the hit-and-miss pedagogic techniques used to mostly successful effect in mainstream schooling—where teachers are able to assume a cohort of literacy-oriented children and a background of school-oriented parents. In such situations, even dull and uninspiring teachers can still produce results.

There were a wide range of views and approaches being tried with the aim of improving literacy and to a lesser extent, numeracy. Staffroom after staffroom seemed to be saturated with literacy media and curriculum support materials, both departmental and industry produced, going back many years. Coupled with the diffidence some teachers feel about teaching Western concepts in the first instance—for fear of contributing to an assimilationist rather than educationalist outcome—it is small wonder that some teachers are tentative about the role and place of literacy instruction for Indigenous students. Some have put it to the review that Indigenous students, particularly secondary-age students with remaining poor literacy, should be taught 'functional literacy'—that is, sufficient to fill in forms and comprehend procedural instructions. Others have argued that given the poor employment prospects facing many Indigenous students, the emphasis on literacy and numeracy is misplaced. 'Is this community ever going to be able to fully employ those people? The goals are unrealistic'

Such arguments are understandable but run the danger of prejudging and circumscribing the outermost limits of what students might be extended to. Rather, students should be engaged at their starting level and moved to a literacy end point that is ultimately determined by the student's potential, rather than by external assumption.

The review briefly considered the debates on the applicability and appropriateness of First Steps versus Walking Talking Texts and were persuaded that the two approaches are in fact complementary and should not be regarded as in competition.[42] It is essential that teachers maintain high performance expectations of their students—both First Steps and Walking Talking Texts are methodologies that encourage this and can be used side-by-side (Murray 1998; NTDE undated). Such debates are distracting attention from more significant priorities for oracy, literacy and numeracy development.

Explicit pedagogy

Many teachers described the need for what they called explicit teaching or explicit pedagogy and are trialling different approaches toward this end. The review noted with particular interest the work of the Scaffolding Literacy Project—currently being implemented at Yipirinya School, Alice Springs—and the THRASS program at Yirara College. THRASS stands for **T**eaching, **H**andwriting, **R**eading **A**nd **S**pelling **S**kills and aims to move students beyond the one-letter-makes-one-sound method, which relies on students developing a prodigious sight memory of words in the absence of any means for comprehending how the language is actually operating.

The review had the opportunity of seeing the scaffolding program in place at Yipirinya when the architects of the program were on hand to explain its design. The key to the scaffolding method is an intensive interaction between the teacher and the student giving the student skills in deconstructing and comprehending a text even before the reading commences. It builds from the understanding that 'children from literate middle class families are generally already prepared to engage in discourse around written texts before they arrive at school, and as they progress through the sequence (of schooling) their discursive experiences of home and school tends to be mutually reinforced'. (Rose et al. 1998). The result is that Indigenous students are able to read more involved texts, and get more out of it, than they can using traditional 'bottom-up' approaches which insist on a particular ordering to the reading approach. Variations of the scaffolding technique are a critical part of Walking Talking Texts and First Steps.

[42] This confirms findings from research exploring the relationship between First Steps and ESL learning which found that First Steps was useful for monitoring and supporting the development of ESL learners in spelling and writing, when used in conjunction with knowledge of the cultural and linguistic background of the learner and the processes of learning English as a second language. (Dewsbury 1994; WAED 1994)

Good practice: Scaffolding Literacy at Yipirinya School

This independent Indigenous controlled school has been an icon of Indigenous education in the Territory for many years. It was clear during the review's visit that students are achieving at the school. The school has a very strong team spirit and very close relationships between the staff and families of students at the school. For example, the bus drivers are considered to be key staff at the school because they are the first contact between students, their families and the school in the daily bus runs. The ease with which the drivers can relate to the families of the student's—especially at an early hour of the morning!—assists in getting students to school. Bus services in other regions that do not incorporate these attributes, and are run purely as a business, have less success as a result. At the school, set in the context of Indigenous customary education, is the 'scaffolding' method of assisting SAE acquisition by students. The core elements of this technique can be found in other resources, e.g. 'First Steps' and 'Walking Talking Texts', but the program at Yipirinya is an NT pilot between the school and the University of Canberra, Division of Communication and Education. The review is impressed with the educational soundness of this program and the results it has achieved elsewhere. The progress of 'Scaffolding Literacy' at Yipirinya should be carefully monitored by NTDE.

The common factors behind the claimed success of these programs is the requirement that teachers have a thorough understanding of the underpinnings of their own literacy and of where the difficulties might lie for newcomers to Standard Australian English. In other words, the component logics of English and its rules for literacy are brought to the surface in a deliberate and objective way. As Brian Gray put it to the review, 'Learning to read requires the learner to achieve considerable control over literate as opposed to oral language. Books are not written the way we speak'. (Submission to review. See also Gray 1998)

It is not within the expertise or competence of this review to assess the superiority or otherwise of these approaches. However, it is clear there is an urgent and widespread need for all schools, in the face of high turnover and uniquely challenging teaching conditions, to develop school-level policies which detail how language acquisition programs are run in the school. The expectations of teachers in classrooms, assessment procedures and overall school goals also need to be addressed. While recognising the need for, and desirability of, teacher creativity and innovation in programming, it is essential that new teachers are provided programs to follow until they are at a point of easy familiarity with the school, the students and the curriculum, and are able to innovate within the parameters of a rigorous framework. The department should explore every opportunity to provide materials which can be used by teachers, so that amid the natural variety that exists between individual teachers and schools, there is an overall consistency in the approach and educational materials used. This is particularly important in the face of high teacher turnover, high student mobility, when ESL profiles are only part of the answer.

An explicit approach would address some of the concerns of Indigenous people on what they saw as the reluctance of some teachers to be strong in their literacy instruction, summarised by the following observation, 'Kardiya (white) teachers should not be frightened of teaching English properly'

Literacy and numeracy support materials

Schools are unevenly equipped with literature that children can relate to as they mature and which remains stimulating and iterative. This is not the same as claiming a lack of materials - there are many readers and abundant kits arriving on an almost daily basis from education product marketers throughout the NT. The common complaint centres on the lack of teaching resources which both respect the academic level of the student and their age-level interests. A marked gap seems to be in literature designed for older children in upper primary and junior secondary who have the interests of young adults but poor literacy skills. One principal remarked, 'In the secondary area I've still got kids who can't read but you can't give them baby stuff, which they find insulting'.

Teachers have attempted to deal with this by developing inhouse productions using student work. This material has an important place in the creative work program, particularly as empowering and inclusive exercises for the students, but as one submission put it, 'Teacher developed reading materials lack the appeal of professionally produced materials. This is a common problem.' To the lack of 'appeal', the review would add 'sophisticated pedagogic intent'. However, the current alternative is to drag failing Aboriginal readers through 'a tedious progression of simple sentence readers. The net effect of this process [has] ... the effect of stretching Grade 1 and 2 materials across the 6-8 years of schooling'. (Gray undated: 2)

It is recommended that NTDE investigates means of ensuring that quality materials are available within all schools and that information on recommended guided reading schemes is readily available. Again, it is important that opportunities for teacher innovations are not taken away—the aim is to support new teachers and schools facing high turnover until current staff momentum is changed. The enabling potential of electronic media should also be explored, as should the role of literature production centres. The NTDE should also investigate options for making a reading scheme available to parents, and not just restricted to teachers and schools. The process that is developed should have as a component the rapid removal of material from schools which have been identified as clearly unsuitable, including out-of-date curriculum support material, and the resurrection of any previously developed material that has clear efficacy and educational significance.

Best practice

During the review's visits to schools, examples were noted, both large and small, of action that had been taken at schools to improve educational outcomes. The examples noted had a number of features in common. The initiatives were school based and had been largely developed by principals and/or teachers. They were strongly supported by the staff team at the school, and in particular the principal. And little or no evidence was available of a focused effort to professionally evaluate, and if appropriate, promulgate them systemically.

The initiatives taken by the teaching team at the Yirrikala Homelands Centre School are a good example among many others of such action.

In 1994 a meeting of teachers was held to discuss the problems experienced in homeland centre schools in using the existing curriculum resource available, i.e. School of the Bush. A number of problems were identified including no intended student learning outcomes, too many different levels and units for homeland teachers to manage, and no attention to oracy in the curriculum. One other major problem lay in homeland teachers not being able to effectively assess the learning outcomes of their students. The result of all this was that the books were largely left in boxes, which are still there, and were not used by the teachers. In a series of subsequent workshops, using an 'action research' approach the teachers at Yirrkala Homeland Centre Schools developed the teacher resource material that is being used now. Action research is still being used to progressively refine the product.

The review saw this material being used effectively in outstation classrooms. It is clearly designed to provide the best possible support for the circumstances in which outstation teachers operate. The work to be done on the day, the responses to be expected from the students and the assessment of progressive outcomes are all provided for in the material. It is also clear how transferable this resource—suitably modified—would be to other teaching situations. Even in large urban schools the review heard concerns from excellent neophyte teachers of their difficulties in basic lesson programming for effectively teaching in an Indigenous cultural and language environment.

Throughout this report a number of brief descriptions are included of 'best practice.' The examples are by no means exhaustive, nor are they the only examples in individual schools of initiatives in that school. They are simply an attempt to demonstrate that there are many dedicated, committed, and professionally competent educators working in often difficult circumstances, to improve outcomes for their Indigenous students. But highlighting their existence in this report does little to address the larger issue of systemic reform.

Strategic Support Unit

Currently curriculum is developed and refined in an extensive and expensive process of trial, intervention, refining and Board of Studies accreditation. Both the system and schools are localising curriculum by doing rewrites and reviews on existing curricula. There is a particular need for curriculum documents and resources which are accessible to second language speakers of English without reducing their intellectual content. The review believes this process must be simplified and recommends that curriculum supplied to remote schools should be sequential, easy to follow, and not overloaded with supplementary support documents. These materials can be purchased extensively throughout Australia and internationally, and adapted for local conditions by schools around an outcomes framework.

No teacher training or orientation program can adequately prepare a teacher for the experience of teaching in a remote Indigenous community. The reality in the bush is that although there are significant problems with many children not attending school regularly, many who do attend regularly still do not show academic progress commensurate with their attendance. Programs of learning must be pedagogically appropriate to the learning needs of the student, must be comprehensive and developmental, both within each year level and across levels.

Being required to follow a syllabus does not entail the cramping of teaching style or impugn teacher professionalism. The manner in which the teacher teaches what the syllabus prescribes, will continue to be a matter of individual expression, personality and creativity. In respect of teacher professionalism, a teacher's responsibility must always be to safeguard the interests of the students, to recognise that meeting students' learning needs must predominate over all other considerations.

It is probably no longer appropriate to rely on curriculum documents that give a broad outline of the knowledge and skills each year level should be acquiring, then expect teachers—particularly new teachers and Indigenous teachers for whom English is their second language—to put together a strategic and development program of learning. Instead a syllabus approach should be considered that provides concise statements of the contents—specific knowledge and skills—that students need to master. This in turn should be organised in a sequence that derives from a well tested pedagogy that has been shown to reliably develop the knowledge and skills of Indigenous children. Thus, even if teachers do not fully understand the underlying pedagogy, by systematically following the steps of the syllabus, learning will take place which is developmental and includes revisiting and reinforcing concepts met earlier. This will ensure that the knowledge and skills gained are made permanent.

With a clear syllabus in place, useful resources, such as self-contained student workbooks matching each step of the learning sequence, can be readily developed that will give teachers clear guidance on how to proceed with their classes' learning program. This will minimise the time spent in preparation of materials and produce

- less stress
- more time to concentrate on creating a conducive learning environment
- more time to develop an understanding of, and ability to direct the cross-cultural dynamics of the classroom
- more time to develop positive and motivating relationships with students and their families
- increased satisfaction with work.

In terms of system reforms, the reconceptualisation required in education is profound. It reaches beyond the questions of budgets, class size, teacher pay, and traditional conflicts over curriculum. Traditional curriculum development need not be part of a contemporary education department's core business. Certainly not one the size of the NTDE where both expertise and products can be accessed from a national and international education market, and refined in the field. The review encountered examples of entrepreneurial and innovative work taking place in schools. NTDE needs to be able to provide an informed interpretation of what is available and what is being developed, and assessing it for use in Northern Territory schools.

A small entrepreneurial sourcing unit is required—not a revamped curriculum cell—that can scan the environment internally and externally; can source, analyse and package products and ideas; identify their value to the system; and communicate them more widely. The composition of the group must not remain static. The unit's tasks are those that confident teachers in the field with thorough understandings of the requirements of Indigenous education should be able to do with assistance from strategic analysts. The group itself should be used as a vehicle for empowering, thinking, providing experiences and breaking down mind-sets. The unit should be seen as a place to concentrate intellectual capacity to identify and analyse possibilities, assess them for strategic fit and create the challenge to find funds from within existing resources by discarding less productive procedures. They must identify possible next steps. The unit must be willing to apply lessons learned on the front line even when they conflict with long held orthodoxies. In other words it needs to establish strategies that tap the best ideas of every employee. On the other hand, it also needs to be willing to learn from outsiders as well as insiders, so it needs to establish borrowing processes and in turn learning goals for employees. It must not compromise standards. It should ensure that the core competencies required of staff are those adequate to deal with change.

The challenge is to make innovation the ongoing process but at the same time the unit should not be seen as the source of innovation necessarily but rather a mechanism for guiding it. As such, the unit will need access to reliable management information. To ensure the efficiency and customer focus of the unit, consideration should be given to funding it by charging for its services on a cost recovery basis.

Good practice - literacy outreach work, Papunya CEC

An initiative at Papunya CEC the review did not see elsewhere were regular lessons being conducted in the homes of young adult bi-literate tutors between 5.00 pm and 7.00 pm on Tuesday and Thursday nights. A resource box containing ESL ILSS and other material is maintained at the school and is taken to the homes as required. When the review visited, around seventeen students were attending these lessons which concentrated upon oral English, literacy and preventative health. It is important that the tutors are competent and young themselves, as the school has found that students who would otherwise clam up with non-Indigenous staff are more experimental in sounding out words and 'having a go' when they are amongst peers. Unfortunately, NTDE does not regard such out-of-hours learning as attendance, which means additional departmental resources are not dedicated to the initiative.

Libraries

The role of libraries has been briefly mentioned previously. The review received a submission from the Northern Territory Library and Information Service (NTLIS) which provides funding and support to public and school libraries throughout the NT. While local government is the primary deliverer of community—public—library services, NTDE funds the development of school library services through the targeted provision of resources delivered by the Northern Territory Library and Information Service.

Under the Commonwealth Program's 'Literacy Projects of Territory Wide Significance,' since 1997 a comprehensive upgrading program has been undertaken under the 'Literacy Through Libraries' project, with the objective of bringing all school libraries to a national standard. Remote schools are encouraged to select their own resources for their libraries, because they are in the best position to know their schools' needs. However, selection and acquisition of appropriate library resources is not always easy for remote schools with untrained library staff.

As part of 'Literacy Through Libraries', resources are purchased, catalogued and labelled centrally by NTDE Officers and NTLIS support staff, for target schools. These centralised services are also available to remote schools not currently part of the 'Literacy Through Libraries' project.

Funding of Stage 3 of this project is not guaranteed. While Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) funding was also received in 1998 for the same project, there has been no ongoing allocation. Without a strategic approach to the upgrading and appropriate resourcing of school libraries, it is likely that opportunities will be lost. School priorities will often dictate that school-based funding is utilised on immediate priorities rather than the longer-term proposition of increasing literacy levels in the community overall.

Except where joint use arrangements bring economies of scale in staffing and resource provision, schools have made little use of the services provided by community libraries. Similarly, in communities in which there is no community library, it may be that school libraries could extend their services to meet the literacy needs of the broader community. The NT Library and Information Service has been exploring these issues and investigating alternate service models with an Aboriginal Reference Group comprising Indigenous representatives of key communities. However, a high level of commitment by the NTDE and the Department of Corporate and Information Services—in which NT Library and Information Service is situated—will be required if libraries are to fulfil their potential as key deliverers of literacy and numeracy improvement. In relation to remote communities, a coordinated approach to the delivery and development of community and school library and information services, involving partnership with Indigenous people, is critical to improving literacy and associated educational, employment and wider social and economic outcomes.

Literature Production Centres

Literature production centres (LPC) and language centres must play an important role in support of 'two-way learning'. It has been noted elsewhere the important role they can play in quality materials production and teacher training and in particular the training of neophyte non-local teachers. Current evidence shows that in many parts of the Northern Territory such LPC support is thin on the ground in the face of concentrations of resources in a few communities. One contributor also drew attention to the complexity of LPCs:

> Supposedly set up to offer schools autonomy and greater control over what they produce, I believe [LPCs] have done the opposite. The complexity of the printing process and the sheer number of hours required to produce quality material have resulted in the production of small quantities or poor quality (or both). Remote schools ... have then had to deal with high maintenance costs and further delays whilst waiting for parts and technicians. Each LPC ... has a room (or rooms) full of previous generations of printing equipment that have been mothballed, either in need of repairs or simply replaced with the next technology that promised to simplify the printing process ... Local staff or teachers as a whole are no more empowered than they were with an offset press and darkroom. (Submission to review)

The NTDE should examine a rationalisation of LPCs to maximise the benefit of these resources to the whole of the Northern Territory and to more evenly spread the resources beyond bilingual schools. Possibilities include establishing regional centres of expertise, which are tasked with the collation of high-quality vernacular and English language learning materials. Such centres require a clear focus on their role and ambit and should concentrate resources on what they are best placed to do—involving staff and community members in the preparation of texts and artworks—while centralising the highly capital intensive printing equipment and specialised publication expertise.

The LPCs may be able to undertake and charge for commissioned work—however, this should not overtake their primary function, which is to produce locally appropriate and high-quality learning content for remote area schools. Outsourcing work which could be completed more efficiently in urban centres, e.g. printing, website coordination, binding or finishing, should be explored, as should opportunities for using desktop publishing applications and Internet-based tools which enable collaborative projects to be undertaken involving dispersed contributors. The Institute for Aboriginal Development would be a key player in such projects in the Central Australian region. Recognising the specialist nature of the work, LPC supervisors need to be qualified or experienced and not, as one submission contributor put it to the review, 'a Balanda teacher's partner'. The rationalisation should see LPCs shift their emphasis to training local people in the use of contemporary technologies such as the Internet and digital copiers for local production and distribution. These are ultimately easier to use, more cost effective, and less dependent on the need to sustain elaborate publishing and printing infrastructure in difficult-to-service locations.

Recommendations – Literacy and numeracy

Explicit pedagogy

It is recommended that

109 NTDE develops a strategy for all schools, in the face of high turnover, and uniquely challenging teaching conditions, which detail how language acquisition programs are delivered in the school.

Literacy and numeracy support materials

It is recommended that

110 NTDE ensures quality materials are available and information on guided reading schemes is available within all schools. This includes the potential of electronic media.

111 particular focus is placed on appropriate material relevant to secondary-age Indigenous students.

112 NTDE explores options for making this material available to parents and not just restricted to teachers and schools.

Strategic Support Unit

It is recommended that

113 a Strategic Support Unit be established to provide critical management advice on student services.

Libraries

It is recommended that

114 a Service Level Agreement between NTDE and the Northern Territory Library and Information Service is established to clarify expectations regarding services to be provided to remote school libraries—as well as urban school libraries. Key issues to be considered include the level and nature of services, funding for resources and the appropriate use of joint use facilities.

Literature Production Centres

It is recommended that

115 NTDE rationalises literature production centres and explore opportunities to retain text production, graphics and illustration in communities and have publication tasks completed elsewhere.

116 literature production centres shift their focus to take advantage of contemporary technologies.

Attendance and participation

The review took the position that, complex as the task of education is, as a first requirement, children must attend school consistently to progress. In relation to Indigenous education, poor attendance is without doubt the primary cause of poor educational outcomes.

Attendance

Staff and community members emphasised this point over and over

> If you don't go to school, you don't get the outcomes.

> Attendance is huge – it is a significant problem. There are so many reasons. Lots of camp kids don't come – there's a large number of orphans down there, the parents that are there are overwhelmed by the demands. Plus kids stay up so late with the adults – they just can't get up to start at 8am. (Case Study 27)

Attendance is a deep concern for Indigenous school staff as well as parents and community members anxious about their children's futures. As an Indigenous teacher wrote

> Some places have poor attendance. The parents and families are weak, and don't ensure children attend school. Children make excuses: 'My clothes are dirty, I have no smoko money … I don't want to go to school.' So they don't. Over the last 3-4 years, attendance has steadily fallen. (Submission to review)

> We should be pushing children. Education is a must. The world is changing and indigenous people will be left behind. Let white people run things for us. We should be up front and educating our young people and let them come back and lead us. (Case Study 32)

In fact, attendance was a key issue for teachers everywhere.

> If the kids aren't in school it doesn't really matter what we teach. Some of the kids have the equivalent of zero education because of their poor attendance. (Case Study 10)

> Attendance is important - kids that come every day do advance with literacy and numeracy more than those that don't because they don't learn these things anywhere else.

> We all know that people are dealing with real distractions, but teaching relies on teaching in sequences. So I'm wondering if it is possible to teach in a way that is fragmented . . . It is very demanding on teachers to be prepared to mark time a lot of the time and be poised to do intensive work when everyone is on the spot. But then this punishes the kids who do turn up – who are cycled through the beginnings over and over. (Interview)

Indigenous people in every community visited made similar concerned observations. In a number of communities the Chair of the review was spontaneously asked by concerned community members to include in his addresses some words on the critical importance of attendance. On one of these occasions, an Indigenous teacher said to the Chair, 'tell the community when you speak to them that the best way to convince white politicians and white public servants that we value bilingual education, is for kids to attend the school'. Similar requests were made in non-bilingual schools. In at least two schools, Indigenous people told the review they wanted to survey the parents who aren't sending their kids to school to find out what the issues were. At another, an Indigenous teacher of considerable experience took the floor of a community meeting, seeking urgent feedback.

> Parents! You should support us for your kids to get more education. You've got to send your kids to school to learn properly, everyday, not just once or twice, for our future! I've been teaching a long time – parents are the main thing. Send kids everyday. Talk to us face to face, what are we doing wrong for your kids, so we can sort it out. Talk to us about what we are doing. (Case Study 9)

Good practice: Attendance incentives at Alekerange School

At Alekerange, an excursion is provided for senior primary students at the end of each semester. These can be 'big ticket' interstate trips or more often local places of cultural interest to the students. The excursions are directly linked to attendance and the records of attendance are prominantly displayed in the classroom. A one dollar 'fine' is imposed on the total excursion fee for every day of unexplained absence of the student. The 'fines' are paid by the family and no student misses out on the excursion. This initiative has the full support of the community and has increased the attendance for the class to around 90%.

The review believes that students must attend for an average minimum of four days of school per week in order to gain real educational benefit. In the words of an experienced principal,

> Five days a week is the optimum with the amount of information the kids need to absorb these days, four days out of five on average is the minimum, three days is borderline, and anything less than that is childminding, not teaching.

This is a generous concession. The view from the Education Department of Western Australia is that students who have nine or more days unexplained absence from school over a year are more likely to be performing below age in overall academic competence.[41] As a bush principal said to the review

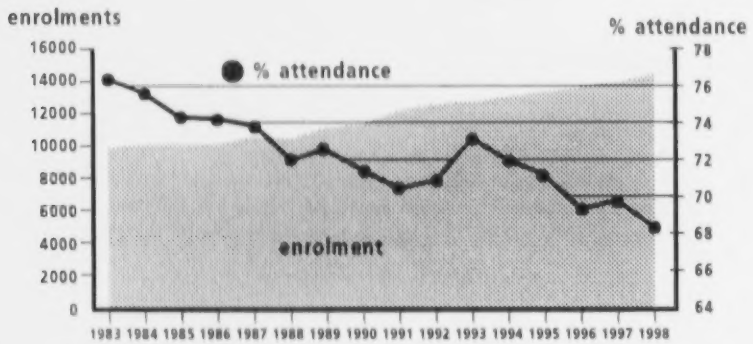
> Kids have to attend regularly to benefit from education. For Indigenous kids, with the huge gulf between Western language and culture and their own language and culture, exemplary attendance is even more critical. If a child misses an average of only one day per week, over a period of five years they have missed an entire year of school.

Poor attendance has a compound effect on both regular attendees and the poor attendees themselves. Teachers and students both spoke of the frustration of having to repeat old material in order to incorporate a new or returning student. In some schools visited by the review, irregular attendees are separated from regular attendees in order to minimise the disruptive impact, with quite noticeable educational effect. This is more difficult to put into effect in urban schools, which are sometimes dealing with one or two students in class of otherwise regular students, for whom such segregation would be more overtly stigmatising.

Attendance and outcomes

It has been a disheartening feature of this review to hear repeat claims from parents, educators and interested parties of an overall deterioration in educational outcomes, with particular reference to English oracy, literacy and numeracy. It is beyond argument that there is a direct link between regular attendance and good educational outcomes. The review has shown that at the same time Indigenous enrolments have been increasing in line with population growth over the last decade, attendance has been declining.

Figure 7: Enrolments versus attendance, 1983 – 1998[42]



This decline is significant in light of research demonstrating a clear correlation between regular attendance and student progress. Yirara College, for instance, have collated term-by-term test results for their students from the beginning of 1995 through to end of 1998 to reveal a high correlation between attendance, achievement and progress across the school. They found a high degree of positive association (r^2=0.66) between the number of continuous days of attendance and improvement in the test score. The form of this relationship between attendance and improvement is such that the expected improvement in the test score over forty days—one term—of continuous attendance is 4.3%.

[41] EDWA Correspondence, 31 August 1999.
[42] Source: NTDE data.

While not conclusive, the Yirara research, combined with clear evidence of declining attendance overall, gives merit to the widespread belief that educational performance has not improved but has deteriorated over the last ten to fifteen years.

Recent DETYA-funded research undertaken by the Menzies School of Health Research (MSHR) in collaboration with the Independent Schools Association of the Northern Territory has shown that Indigenous students who have high attendance patterns are also likely to have less ear disease and hearing loss and stay in school until they are older. Conversely, low attending students are more likely to have poor hearing, high ear disease rates, and more likely to drop out altogether.

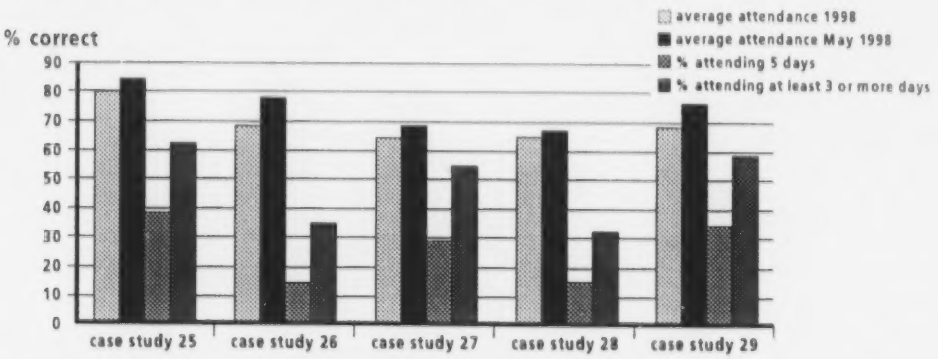
Regularity and consistency

System-generated data on attendance does not reveal patterns at a school-by-school level in terms of regularity or consistency. To get a measure of what might be happening, the review explored with case study schools overall weekly and day-by-day attendance. Schools were asked to nominate a snapshot period that represented as close to normal a week as possible, i.e. when there were no large absences due to excursions, ceremonies, etc. It should be noted that this introduces the possibility that schools nominated their best case scenario. Information on the East Arnhem case study schools follows.

Table 16: Attendance East Arnhem Case Studies

Case study	% attended 5 days	% attended 4 days	% attended 3 days	% attended 2 days	% attended 1 day	% attended 0 days
25	37.3	13.5	11.8	8.5	6.7	22
26	14.1	8.4	12.4	7.1	6.6	50.8
27	29	11.3	13.6	4.5	6.8	34
28	14.4	7.9	9.4	12.8	10.3	45
29	33.8	14.2	10.9	9.4	6.5	24.9

Figure 8: Case study school attendance over snapshot week



As can be seen from Figure 8, during the nominated snapshot period, only three out of the five schools had greater than 50% attendance for three or more days—at 62.6%, 53.9% and 58.9% for case studies 25, 27 and 29 respectively. **For two out of the five schools—case studies 26 and 28—the majority of students did not attend at all.** The percentage of students who attended school for at least three or more days is well below the school's figures for average attendance.

Despite attempts at accuracy, these figures beg the question of what the average attendance recorded for schools actually refer to. There is no distinction between regular and irregular attendance, nor what proportion of the day a student is in place. It is impossible to know if it is the same group of children who are attending or otherwise in any given period.

Even so, the review's own research accords with statements put to us by educators on the ground. An experienced principal from one of the larger remote area communities described attendance in the following way.

> A culture of schooling is poorly developed within community life. About 30% of students of an estimated 250 of school-age in the community attend school very regularly (almost every day). This figure broadens out to 70% when determined against the lesser criterion of students attending 1 to 4 days every week. The remaining 30% consists of those who are itinerant, spending short periods in [the community] then visiting elsewhere for a time before returning, and also those who stay within the community but constantly avoid coming to school. (Case Study 9)

Punctuality is also a problem—children who drift into school throughout the morning disrupt the school and may not get the information that they need to complete their work for the rest of the day. This is a particular problem if the child is late or absent on a Monday morning, as this is often the time when the work for the entire week is discussed.

Some schools have attempted to address this problem by having physical education or light play as the first activities of the day, with the idea of encouraging children to get to school on time, and to ensure latecomers cause minimal disruption and not miss crucial information. Others collect children by whatever transport the school has available—even the principal's own vehicle. Some schools offer breakfast programs, aiming to cure hunger and offer an enticement to attend school at the same time. In many schools, both punctuality and attendance are encouraged through various forms of incentive including excursions, involvement in sport or other recreational events.

The various strategies sometimes work, perhaps only for a time before tapering off, or may not have any impact at all. The key point is that in all cases, schools are grappling with attendance in variously inventive or lacklustre ways in what appears to be total isolation from any departmental advice on strategies or apparent interest in success or failure. The overriding interest in attendance from a departmental perspective is to determine school funding and teacher numbers. **While everyone highlights the importance of improving attendance, there seems to be no systemic effort toward actually doing it.**

> The fact that the review had to resort to original research to discern patterns, is itself indicative of what might be seen as a sustained low expectation of improvement at the system level which, if left unchecked, can destroy local drive and attempts at school leadership.

Recommendations - Attendance

It is recommended that

117 a comprehensive attendance strategy is developed as a matter of urgent priority, building on the range of useful practices already being implemented in individual schools

118 a developed comprehensive attendance strategy be a critical element of the partnership agreements under Self-Managing Schools Program (see Conclusion).

Mobility

Significant population mobility is a growing issue arising out of the increased accessibility of communities, due to improved roads and transportation, and the increased availability of disposable income.[41] Greater access to traditional country is also a contributor, as people move toward re-establishing as far as possible old land occupation patterns.

The frequent movement exposes children to a number of educational risks, including

- the increased probability of repeat work or missed blocks, as the sequencing of lessons, topics and approaches varies from teacher to teacher and from school to school
- the diminished likelihood of a relationship of rapport and understanding developing between the student and teacher
- ad hoc transfer of student records, which, if it takes place at all, is most likely to take form of a fax with scant detail about the student, as schools claim an inability to predict where a student will turn up or from where the student has come.

Describing the small exposure to literacy instruction received by students who are constantly coming and going, a school board chairperson from a secondary college in Darwin observed, 'To expect a person to become literate with such a small amount of material is like trying to get someone to swim in a bath'. (School Case Study 12)

The problem of understanding attendance in urban areas is exacerbated by the fact that there is high mobility of children from one school to another in urban areas, or between schools in urban and remote areas, whereby children may be absent for extended periods and then go back to their original school. It is difficult to ascertain how many children are dropping out of school and how many are simply moving from school to school. (Nadarajah 1997; Reaburn 1993)

The fact that at the present time attendance and mobility are not tracked systematically compounds the poor learning outcomes, teacher dissatisfaction and turnover, and subsequently exacerbates the overall cost impact to government. The current 'non-system' of dealing with student mobility sees teachers constantly starting anew with the child and having to determine the child's academic aptitude and content exposure in the absence of a developed student–teacher relationship. The systems used for tracking students, if they are in place, are at the discretion of the principal, which explains the high variability from quill pen systems to effective electronic databases (cf. Jabiru School). The Computer Based Administration System for Schools—or 'CBASS' as it is more commonly known—is used, but certainly not on a system-wide basis, and therefore is unable to track student movement between schools. Out of 183 schools, CBASS is used in all secondary schools, but in only 26% of primary schools, reflecting its focus on recording achievements in the final years of school.

[41] In the 1996 census, out of a possible total population of 533—as determined by health service surveys—221 people in the Jabiru and Kakadu National Park did not identify as being Aboriginal, which was interpreted as a significant decline in the number of usual residents in the area (Taylor 1996).

The importance of transferring student information as a routine action is analogous to the requirement within the health arena. A patient's movements have to be tracked to enable clinics to do essential follow-up work to support the health of the patient and to avoid the risk of repeating costly and often traumatic investigative work. In this regard, the NTDE should note the recent initiatives within Territory Health Services on patient tracking and in particular the capacities of the Community Care Information System (CCIS). The Community Care Information System is a patient information system which has been developed to coordinate the services of agencies and professional groups with the objective of improving both patient service delivery and cost-effectiveness. Using a common patient identifier, CCIS is a comprehensive community database that can

- track a patient's history from first point of contact through all service contacts and discharge
- identify at any point in time the person or organisational unit responsible for planning and providing services
- relate the reason why the person became a patient to the services provided and outcomes
- identify planned or scheduled services which remain unresolved or incomplete during the period of service
- accommodate profession-specific approaches to case management as well as patient-centred approaches across professional discipline boundaries.

It is the advice of Territory Health Services that these core functions could be easily translated into other, non-health related, service areas. The THS Client Master Index contains over 95% of the Northern Territory population, and once all immunisation data has been uploaded, will contain 100% of Northern Territory children. With the generic nature of the basic design of the system, there is potential to expand the coverage of the system to include other community/population service areas. It is the recommendation of this review that NTDE consider the cost-effectiveness of the CCIS and the potential for linking it with mandated school-based student tracking systems.

Mobility should not only be catered for in terms of mandated student information systems, but it can also be anticipated and organised around from an education service provision point-of-view. Like the movements of many people, some imperatives for Indigenous mobility cannot be anticipated and fall within the 'life circumstances' category. Other rationales are less arbitrary and more purposeful. Ethnographic research suggests, for example, that the majority of Indigenous population movements take place within circumscribed parameters based on language and cultural affiliations, are not phantasmagoric and random, but are in fact quite patterned, predictable and rational. For instance, Dr John Taylor's research on Indigenous population mobility has led him to conclude that many Indigenous people live within a clearly definable activity space, within which there are number of residential places which can be mapped. 'The community' in fact only refers to one of many locations where people may actually operate (Taylor 1998). For example, many rural-based people typically spend part of the year in urban centres, which are effectively regional service sites, and also move seasonally to outstations. This short-term urban-ward movement is one that many of the town schools are particularly familiar with. Urban teachers told the review in some frustration 'kids turn up here and we don't know who they are, except that they are from such and such a community'.

What this means in terms of school attendance, and what it could mean in terms of providing for the students, are questions in urgent need of answer. Research conducted within the NTDE by the Alice Springs-based linguist Robert Hoogenraad, who investigated language use and education needs in the Barkly and Sandover regions in 1990 and 1991, provides some clues. Among other things, Hoogenraad conducted a detailed language census of all Indigenous people in the survey area, which covered some ninety-five places from the Gulf of Carpentaria to the Plenty Highway, and from the Queensland border to the Stuart Highway. This census provided information on the travel and population movements of people in the area. Hoogenraad concluded that the movements were typically within a well-defined language area 'which could usefully be used as the basis for organising schools and outstation schools into clusters' (Hoogenraad 1993: 61). This research suggests that by responding to existing patterns of social affiliation between Indigenous communities

> an organisation of schools could be more responsive to the movement of children between schools, and to the rapid demographic changes inherent in small communities. [This] could also be the basis for ... integrating the delivery of primary, post-primary and basic adult education and training, the delivery of professional and curriculum support, including ESL and vernacular language services to schools, the planning of school programs, staffing and staff development, etc. (ibid: 2)

Again, this reiterates findings from the 1996 PAC report

> The PAC Committee is convinced that consultation with Aboriginal communities will only become effective if it is based on regions delineated by languages spoken rather than by some arbitrary geographic boundary which divides language groups and includes non-traditional alliances of groups. The Committee believes that the NT Department of Education should redraw its regional boundaries to fit in with language groups. This would have the effect of reducing the number of major languages spoken in the region and should enhance the effectiveness of consultation. (PAC 1996: 69)

Recommendations – Mobility

It is recommended that

119 NTDE recognises that there are communities of affiliation between which students and families will move in a patterned way and organise its administration to better align with these affiliated communities.

120 NTDE draws on other agency data and liaises with the various land councils and other relevant organisations, e.g. the community controlled health sector and outstation resource centres to better map and anticipate population movements.

121 NTDE implements student tracking systems that allow teachers to more freely exchange student information between such communities of affiliation, to improve the education continuity for the student.

122 NTDE organises school clusters to correspond with patterns of visiting and residence.

123 NTDE ensures that affiliated schools work collaboratively to share information, jointly plan program delivery, coordinate school services and professional development support, and are consulted as a regional grouping for administrative and policy considerations.

Health issues and wider social context

Poor health was frequently nominated as a key hindrance to learning outcomes, impeding attendance, participation and ability to learn. Students may suffer from hunger and fatigue—the school can tackle part of the former, but is helpless in face of the latter. A school principal commented, 'Many children are in need of proper nourishment: a nutrition program is thus necessary both to assist in improving health and also to satisfy the hunger that causes the listlessness, inattention and concentration lapses so injurious to effective learning' (Case Study 9). A former teacher threw out this challenge to his community

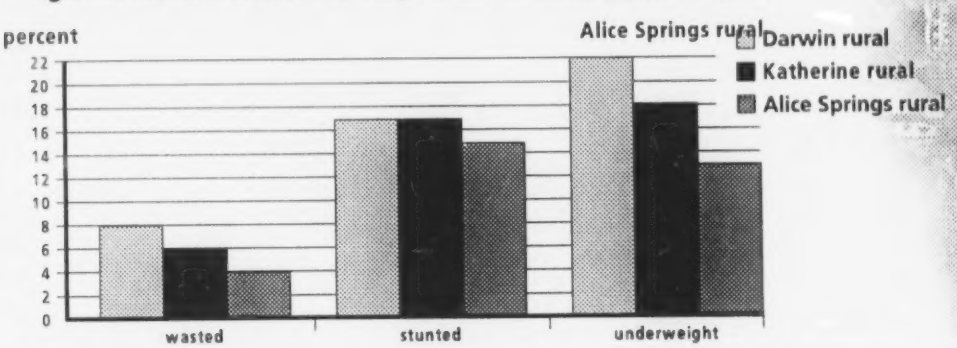
> Where does education start? That is my general question ... From our parents. Children copy from mother and from father, from home ... You have to force your children, get them clean and send them to school! One day I will be six foot under and then where will you be? If you don't feed them, cook the tucker and feed them, if they go hungry, they can't concentrate, they can't learn, their stomach is empty. Half hungry no breakfast, they won't concentrate properly. (Case Study 25)

There is a lack of community level information about the health status of school-age children in remote communities. Several conditions are considered to be detrimental to educational outcomes, including nutritional deficits, hearing impairments, poor eyesight, anaemia and skin diseases. Territory Health Services reporting shows that between 13% and 22% of Indigenous children aged zero to five in the Northern Territory—depending on the region—are clinically underweight (see Table 16). THS further note in their submission to the review that, 'A high percentage of Indigenous school-age children who are underdeveloped at birth due to poor maternal health and nutritional status are more likely to suffer ill health and shorter life spans than those of normal birthweight'.

Table 17: Nutritional status of 0–5-year-olds in the Northern Territory[44]

District	Number of children	% wasted	% stunted	% both wasted & stunted	% under-weight
Darwin rural	568	8.0	17.0	0.2	22.0
Katherine rural	642	6.0	17.0	1.0	18.0
Alice Springs rural	367	4.0	15.0	1.0	13.0

Figure 9: Nutritional status of 0–5-year-olds in the Northern Territory



Recognising this phenomenon, many schools do offer nutrition programs—a mix of breakfast, morning/afternoon tea and lunch programs—but are concerned about usurping the role of parents and engendering increased levels of dependency.

[44] Source: From Infancy to Young Adulthood: Health status in the Northern Territory, 1998. (d'Espaignet et al. 1998)

From a health perspective, the damage of poor nutrition may have already affected the student before they arrive at the school. The crucial period from a nutritional point of view is at four to eighteen months of age, when the brain undergoes a growth spurt. This is also a critical period of vulnerability where faltering growth particularly occurs if a child is malnourished. Put simply, if this occurs, the child's intellectual development and hearing abilities may be affected (Rousham & Gracey 1997; Ruben & Walker 1995; Skull et al. 1997). Poor nutrition can also starve the aveoli lining the gut to the extent that food is no longer properly absorbed (Kukuruzovic et al. 1999). Supplementary programs targeting at risk children—frequently the children of drinkers—undertaken with sensitivity to avoid any stigma, should be undertaken in early childhood to prevent the damage. The potential exists to integrate such interventions within the programs introduced within the Multipurpose Early Childhood Centres recommended by this review.

Health is important to education but equally, education has been demonstrated to be clearly important for health (Caldwell et al. 1990). A submission to the review from Territory Health Services confirms this point:

> Aboriginal health will not be sustainably improved without an educated population and opportunities to use that education in meaningful employment. Australian and overseas studies confirm the strong linear relationship between years of schooling and mortality. The education health linkage is particularly pertinent to women. The impact on child survival and morbidity patterns is well known. Schooling enhances a potential mother's knowledge and skills about effective ways to prevent, recognise, and deal with childhood illnesses.

Together with the problems associated with the impairment to language development related hearing loss (see below) it is absolutely critical that the links between health services and education are built early and maintained at every stage of the child's development. In this context, the review commends the initiative that has been taken in Central Australia to combine the administrations of health and education on a trial basis, which is an important acknowledgement of the inextricable links between the two sectors. The review further recommends the incorporation of health objectives within school action plans and principals' performance management agreements, to ensure the links are maintained in practice as well as theory.

Hearing

Hearing loss has a profound impact on a child's learning. Teachers face particular challenges in classrooms where a majority of children may suffer hearing loss and where all or most of the children are ESL students. The department must ensure a systematic program of training for teachers in teaching practices that take account of hearing loss. The training will need to be repeated regularly to account for high teacher turnover.

There is a clear recognition within Territory Health Services that, given the poor environmental health conditions of many communities, the problem of repeat ear infections continually recurs. School level screening is not routinely undertaken as it would just reaffirm pre-existing knowledge. Instead, the Hearing Program focuses on:

- informing parents
- informing health workers for early detection
- equipping teachers with skills to teach effectively given that there are hearing problems in the classroom
- outfitting classrooms with hearing equipment.

The effectiveness of these last two strategies is reduced by the high turnover of staff. The amplification equipment that was wired into one remote school two years ago is today lying in a box unused because the new staff at the school are unfamiliar with it. During case study consultations school staff raised concerns, shared by the review, that the open plan designs of many classrooms are clearly distracting for children. The array of new concepts being taught are sufficiently difficult to grasp when students have excellent hearing, without the problem being compounded by severe hearing loss, English being a foreign language, and acoustically inferior classrooms. At one school the review was told that attempts to deal with this problem have been strongly resisted by the principal. Only two schools out of the case studies had accommodated hearing impairment in the layout of the classroom and, of these, only one in the actual architecture of the school.

Good practice: Designing for health, Jilkminggan

At Jilkminggan School discussions were taking place about the school's out-of-date mobile primary classrooms and ablution facilities, which were due to be replaced. The department was offering as replacement a tin school on stumps, which in reality represented one big classroom with dividing partitions to separate junior- and upper-primary children. Everyone was angry and the elders were really upset. The principal, the school council and community members were concerned that a tin school was not an option for their children who had varying degrees of deafness. They argued that the school needed individual soundproofed classrooms to compensate for the student's poor hearing. Discussions became very heated. Indigenous people told the review that the department wasn't listening and 'everyone was just standing around. It almost came to a big battle with nulla nullas'. It was a stand-off in which nothing was being resolved.

When the school discovered that they had the option of devolving the building project to the school council, they took it. The school council consulted an architect who visited the community—all members turned out to talk to the architect. As the principal recalled, 'This was an important issue for them and everyone felt strongly about it. There was a set amount of money and there was lots of good talking and everyone agreed they wanted separate L-shaped classrooms for the children that included a private preparation area for teachers'. The school council talked about the children's hearing problems and consulted with hearing specialists from the department. Solid brick walls were built with tiles around the top of the walls, acoustic ceiling tiles were used and flowtex rather than carpet on the floors muffled the sound. Curtains helped with soundproofing.

This was the only school where the review observed acoustically designed architecture, which was provided as a direct result of community pressure.

The review's attention was drawn to a document considered particularly useful in relation to laying out hearing related issues for school teachers [Healthy School Age Kids: The Northern Territory School-Age Child Health Surveillance Program Manual for Remote Communities \Paterson, 1998 #102]. Given the issues faced by the School Hearing Program with teacher turnover, the review considers that such well-regarded material needs to be included in the induction material made available to all new teachers and within each school. It is also important that parents, and carers in general, are fully involved in hearing education and informed about what to lobby for so that if they see an unused box of equipment in a corner it is immediately queried. Despite the turnover, it is essential that teachers are aware of the phenomena of poor hearing and otitis media and strategies for dealing with it, which in remote communities, as Lowell has found, is improved with the presence of vernacular speakers as teachers (Lowell *et* al. 1995).

The Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory (AISNT) and six of its member schools have been involved with the Menzies School of Health Research (MSHR) in an IESIP project: ***Advancing Indigenous Literacy Through Intervention for Hearing Disabilities.*** The project involved 1050 students in thirty-nine classrooms across six Northern Territory schools. At the outset, FM sound field amplification systems were installed in classrooms and regular ear examinations and remedial treatment for existing conditions became part of the school or communities' everyday health care system.

As well, a phonics program specifically designed for Indigenous students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) was added to the curriculum. The literacy levels of the students were assessed before and after this intervention. It was found that Indigenous students have a very high prevalence of ear disease and that literacy levels improve with better hearing, but only if the hearing interventions were matched by regular attendance. **Dramatic advances in literacy were documented for students receiving services through the project who attended at least 75% of school days**. The researchers found that 'High attending Indigenous students are those who have less ear disease and hearing loss, stay in school until they are older, and achieve above Intensive English (T-Year 3)' (MSHR 1999:11)

More specifically, project results as reported by the MSHR team were as follows.

- ENT referrals – 40% had active ear disease and/or need reconstructive middle ear surgery.
- Australian Hearing Referrals – 16% had hearing loss great enough in both ears to meet current criteria for individual FM hearing aids. An additional 24% had conductive hearing loss that may also be educationally significant, if they are Indigenous students learning English as a foreign language.
- Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAP-D) – 38% had signs of poor speech discrimination and intolerance of background noise. This group of students is in addition to those identified as having peripheral hearing losses. Such students may hear different words to those actually spoken (mis-perceive), miss out on parts of what is said, fail to keep pace with rapid speech and shifts in topics, fatigue and 'tune out', etc.
- Performance Objectives – it was specified that students should attend at least 75% of school days to be able to benefit from hearing support services. None of the primary-age students and only 212 secondary-age students—total 20%—met these criteria.

Other outcomes of the project are

- the PA-EFL program, a phonics program developed specifically for Australian Indigenous students learning English as a foreign or 'school' language. The PA-EFL has a pre-post test that can be used to identify incoming students' literacy level, assess literacy progress—rather than resort to standardised tests normed on younger, non-Indigenous populations.
- a computer program for assessment of classroom acoustics, which can be used to inform decisions about
  - student seating arrangements
  - modifications to reduce noise
  - conditions that are favourable or unfavourable for use of sound field speaker systems
  - management of acoustics in non-standard learning environments.

The review considers this research to have practical application in many Indigenous schools.

Substance abuse

Many, many Indigenous contributors singled out substance abuse as a significant issue impacting on poor outcomes and poor attendance.

> ... Drinking often goes on for 4 days of the week. Hardly anyone gets any sleep. Children don't go to school then—too tired. The drinkers disrupt community life, hurt other people, and get sick. Some die. Some have accidents, and get hurt and die. There are not many older people left in some communities.
> Most people don't work ... And they don't have an education to help them get work. So they have mainly learnt to put out their hands and get tax-payers' money. It is better not to work, because social security payments are higher then.
> Children know when the money is coming in. They stay away from school on those days. (Submission to review)

> We have trouble with sniffers. No-one can sleep ... We are fighting in our country. We want good kids. All the kids need to go to school. (Case Study 35)

> The kids are running riot. We don't learn our kids. They are sleeping all day and running around and breaking everything around. Everybody been looking at me and blaming. How are we gunna learn our kids to go to school? They running around like lost sheep ... That's not our kids, that's lost sheep! They do what they want. We don't blame the school, they are working for us to educate our kids. (Case Study 9)

Parents and community members outlined the repeat devastations of substance abuse and how it was impacting on school staff morale, a child's capacity to learn, school vandalism, and the ability of parents to participate in the schooling of their children. The impact of adult drinking on children sees them falling asleep in class after a night of sleep disruption. It also impacts on children starting their own substance abuse, especially petrol sniffing, which often links to truancy. Both situations, either sleep deprivation or children's own substance abuse, diminishes participation and concentration. Parents everywhere pointed to substance abuse as a key cause of poor attendance and outcomes.

There are no easy answers to substance abuse in any community but equally, there is no doubt that reductions in substance abuse would assist the educational outcomes of those students directly affected. An evaluation of the alcohol restrictions in Tennant Creek by the Menzies School of Health Research provides some anecdotal evidence of a positive association between alcohol interventions and school health whereby money usually spent on alcohol went on food for the children. Following the commencement of the trial the principal of a Tennant Creek school reported a significant increase in the number of students, especially younger children, bringing money to school to pay for lunches in advance. 'This activity continued throughout the trial period and had very rarely been experienced before.' (d'Abbs *et al.* 1996: 34)

Recommendations – Health issues and wider social context

General

It is recommended that

124 infant health interventions are introduced within the multipurpose early childhood centres recommended by this review.

125 health objectives are incorporated within school action plans and principal performance management agreements, to ensure the links are maintained in practice as well as theory.

126 community service agreements are established between the school and the community health centre.

127 teachers are trained and supported for their health and community development role.

Hearing

It is recommended that

128 all teachers receive training and support in appropriate teaching practices for students with hearing impairments.

129 benchmark standards for classroom acoustics for students with hearing disabilities and for all Indigenous ESL students are established in collaboration with Territory Health Services, the Australian Government Hearing Laboratory and the Menzies School of Heath Research.

130 a systematic plan is developed, resourced and implemented to upgrade classroom acoustics in accordance with these standards to create sound listening and learning environments for Indigenous students.

Data deficiencies identified in review

In the course of gathering community level information with the idea of sharing data with schools and communities visited, the review confronted long-standing data and reporting deficiencies, which are noted here with particular reference to their future management information implications. The wider social and educational issues associated with these data deficiencies are canvassed elsewhere in this report.

The standard indicators of educational outcomes available within the NTDE are exit age from school, highest level of schooling completed and post-school qualifications. Unfortunately, these indicators yield no indication of the quality of educational outcomes.[43] The only indicators available to assess educational outcomes across the Northern Territory for Indigenous children are those yielded through the Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP) for primary school children. The review discovered only one urban school, Yirara College, which systematically monitors secondary-age Indigenous children using standardised tests. As the PAC noted, 'There are very few secondary-age students in remote Aboriginal communities working at Year 10 level. There are no results, therefore, which can be used to show just how 15-year-old (non-urban Aboriginal) students compare with their age peers in urban schools.' (PAC 1996: 13)

Good practice: Tracking secondary students at Yirara College

The college has tracked the relationship between learning outcomes and attendance. Among the forty-four schools that the review visited, Yirara College was unique in that they analysed routinely collected data on student attendance and achievement. The high correlation that they found between attendance and improvement in scores in aptitude tests administered at the beginning and end of each term provides valuable evidence of what we know to be true—regular attendance is an essential starting point for improvement in educational outcomes. But such data also provides concrete material for the school to demonstrate the results of regular attendance to both students and their families.[44]

[43] See for example Taylor who notes that participation alone in an educational system reveals little about demonstrated ability (Taylor 1996).
[44] Discussion of Yirara data.

Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP)

The MAP testing program, which assesses students using standard literacy and numeracy tests, has been used in remote schools since 1986 and urban schools since 1984. The MAP tests are set at various profile levels—two through to four. At Year 3 level it is expected that most students will be achieving profile level two, while profile level three is the benchmark standard for students in Year 5. Those children who do not make profile level two are considered to be 'at risk of not making adequate progress'.

Up until last year, the testing in remote area schools used different instruments to those of urban schools.[42] The non-urban tests targeted eleven- to sixteen-year-olds, as opposed to children in specific primary grades in urban schools. Thus, neither the tests used, nor the age groups, were comparable.

Furthermore, the age groups targeted within the urban category were also regularly altered. Urban school tests were conducted with children in Years 5 and 7 in 1996—ten- and twelve-year-old students—Years 4 and 6 in 1997—nine- and eleven-year-old students—and Years 3 and 5—eight- and ten-year-old students—from 1998 onwards. Thus longitudinal trend analysis within urban or non-urban groupings is simply not possible.

Prior to the tests, teachers make evaluations of each student, before assigning them to a particular test level. Students can be exempted from the whole test if their teachers believe they are likely to achieve a near zero score on the lowest level possible. Over the years, there have been extremely high levels of exemptions in many remote schools—in some instances entire schools have been exempted. Since reported results noted the number of children exempted, but made no comment on their achievement, all that can be inferred from such high exemption levels is that the children were expected—by their teachers—to score on the tests a near zero result.

In accordance with Commonwealth benchmark reporting requirements, from 1998, eight-year-old and ten-year-old Indigenous students were tested—equating to Years 3 and 5—across both urban and non-urban samples, enabling system-wide comparisons to be made for the first time. Again from 1998 onward, exemptions will continue, albeit with stricter criteria, but the way in which exemptions are reflected in the test results has altered. Pre-1998 exemptions were not included in the overall results for a particular school, a custom which conformed with usual test result reporting practices whereby the average is derived from the scores of all those who actually sit a particular test. From 1998, exempted children are included together with test participants in calculations of the percentage of students who are achieving the national benchmarks for literacy and numeracy, on the basis that an exemption automatically means a student has not achieved the benchmark.[43]

While it is too early to assess the impact of 1998 amendments to MAP procedures, it is assumed that when 1999 data becomes available, any improvements will be reliably reported and trends will be evident. It is the review's belief that, as a result of these shifts, the benchmark reports will inevitably present a worse situation than has been reported in previous years.

[42] For instance, in 1997 non-urban students were tested for stages two through to six and urban students were tested for stages pre-five to beyond seven.
[43] Benchmark achievement is based on a cut score. Students with scores at or above it are considered to have achieved the benchmark and those with scores below the cut score are deemed not to have achieved.

Attendance

Official data regarding attendance is collected eight times per year for the purposes of ensuring staff entitlement formulae are accurate. This data details the average levels of attendance for each month, and are indicative only. The data do not disaggregate day-to-day attendance at the school, nor the consistency of attendance. Within schools, the attendance register is theoretically taken in the morning and again in the afternoon; however, there is no record of what proportion of the day the child in fact spent at school. This contrasts with the systems used within the Education Department of Western Australia. EDWA legislation requires government schools to monitor attendance twice per day—am/pm in primary schools using rolls, with the lesson-by-lesson monitoring in secondary schools converted to am/pm for reporting purposes—through the school administration system. Using Commonwealth-funded Strategic Results Program monies, EDWA has recently introduced an Attendance Monitoring System for collecting first semester absence data by Indigenous Status from every government school, which is used to derive Indigenous attendance rates.

In the NT, it is difficult to know what actually counts as attendance. Absences for cultural reasons may be recorded as attendance, with the notion that cultural activities are themselves legitimate educational events. Legitimate reasons for non-attendance at one school—and therefore not recorded as absences—included 'going to the bush, family problems and sickness'. However legitimate or otherwise the reasons, it is the review's finding that Indigenous students are attending school less frequently than school roll books would suggest.

While attendance data is collected eight times per year, it is not possible to differentiate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous attendance in urban schools using system-level data, without conducting discrete school-by-school surveys of individual student records. Nor is it possible to discriminate between regular and irregular attendees in the amalgamated data.

Given the importance of attendance for student performance, it is essential that a system be developed that can disaggregate attendance records to enable targeted programs and for trends in attendance patterns to be reported accordingly.

Participation rates

There are a number of difficulties associated with the department's measures of participation rates, which present the potential for inefficient allocation of resources, and inaccurate predication of future needs.

Current departmental reports on student participation levels are measured through school enrolment rates and Australian Bureau of Statistics population census counts of single year age groups. These measurements show quite high levels of participation for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous students in the primary school years, which decreases after that for both groups. The data also show that in the decade 1986 to 1996, participation rates have improved across all categories. The implication is that for the primary sector at least the eligible school-age population is receiving a comprehensive schooling service, with participation rates of 97.66% for Indigenous and 99.21% for non-Indigenous students.

Table 18: Northern Territory percentage participation rates - 1986, 1991 and 1996 [17]

Age	Indigenous			Non-Indigenous			Total		
	1986	1991	1996	1986	1991	1996	1986	1991	1996
3-4	30.24%	33.63%	34.77%	35.23%	43.28%	50.20%	33.57%	39.81%	44.09%
5-12	79.78%	89.19%	97.66%	87.52%	94.46%	99.21%	85.03%	92.65%	98.63%
13-17	53.53%	71.06%	65.64%	75.19%	86.10%	85.93%	68.07%	81.08%	78.51%

Table 19: Northern Territory school enrolment by age - 1986, 1991 and 1996

Age	Indigenous			Non-Indigenous			Total		
	1986	1991	1996	1986	1991	1996	1986	1991	1996
3-4	615	794	928	1443	1823	2045	2058	2617	2973
5-12	5722	7472	9253	13229	15178	16003	18951	22650	25256
13-17	2361	3049	3313	6776	7370	7516	9137	10419	10829

Table 20: Northern Territory population by age - 1986, 1991 and 1996

Age	Indigenous			Non-Indigenous			Total		
	1986	1991	1996	1986	1991	1996	1986	1991	1996
3-4	2034	2361	2669	4096	4212	4074	6130	6573	6743
5-12	7172	8378	9475	15116	16069	16131	22288	24447	25606
13-17	4411	4291	5047	9012	8560	8747	13423	12851	13794

Unfortunately, at a community level this data is unreliable.[18] As a result, it may not provide the comprehensive information necessary for accurately reporting true participation rates nor for predicting future resource and service requirements.

[17] Sources: ABS Publication Catalogue No. 4107.7 (p. 9); ABS Publication Catalogue No. 3201.0 (p.13); Statistics and Demography Unit Age/Grade Census 1996; Cdat96 Version 1 & 1996 Indigenous Thematic Profile ABS Catalogue No. 2020.0 (Data prepared by Richard Mu, NTDE).

[18] This is due to a variety of causes (ABS 1996; Taylor 1996). For instance, the high mobility of community members is a significant issue for census enumeration. A study carried out in a central Australian Aboriginal community found that 25%–30% of the population were mobile within a one year period (Warchiver et al. 1999). Other studies also comment on the particularly high mobility of children:

> The October 1987 ethnographic survey ... revealed that half of the 218 children aged nine years or less were absent from their paternal home when the survey was conducted. Many of these were in households which included their paternal or (most commonly) maternal grandmother. In such circumstances, the potential for under-enumeration of children in this age group would appear to be considerable (Martin 1996: 47).

The issue is that the percentage of the population being enrolled may be significantly less than departmental records might otherwise indicate. This potential discrepancy has been revealed in stark terms in a detailed study of the population catchment in the Jabiru area conducted by a specialist demographer from the Australian National University, Dr John Taylor. Table 21 illustrates the difference between registered enrolments at the Jabiru Area School and the estimated service population of the area when more comprehensive population data than that of the census—including, for example, health centre records—are used. As can be seen, Taylor's research indicates that only 45.4% of males and 61.9% of females were enrolled at the school out of the total possible.

Table 21: Jabiru Area School registered enrolments as a percentage of estimated population

Age	Males		Females		Total	
	enrolment	% age group	enrolment	% age group	enrolment	% age group
4	4	33.3	5	100	9	52.9
5	5	125.0	5	71.1	10	90.9
6	7	77.7	4	57.1	11	68.7
7	8	61.5	4	57.1	12	60.0
8	2	14.2	6	120.0	8	42.1
9	5	83.3	4	50.0	9	64.2
10	4	66.6	1	25.0	5	50.0
11	0	0.0	2	50.0	2	25.0
12	2	33.3	5	250.0	7	87.5
13	1	50.0	5	100.0	6	85.7
14	1	100.0	2	40.0	3	50.0
15	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
16	1	16.6	0	0.0	1	0.0
Total	**40**	**45.4**	**43**	**61.9**	**83**	**52.8**

By way of contrast, the following table shows the enrolments for the same school expressed as a percentage of single-year age groups from the 1996 census of population and housing—that is, using data NTDE uses to calculate levels of participation.

Illustrating the unreliability of census data at the community level, the number enrolled in many cases far exceeds the number of children counted in the census for the same area.

Table 22: Jabiru Area School Indigenous enrolments as a per cent of Indigenous single year ages 4-16, 1996 [11]

Age	Males		Females		Total	
	enrolment	% age group	enrolment	% age group	enrolment	% age group
4	3	50.0	1	100.0	4	66.6
5	2	66.6	6	100.0	8	88.8
6	14	175.0	7	140.0	21	161.5
7	7	140.0	7	175.0	14	155.6
8	9	128.5	6	120.0	15	125.0
9	4	133.3	8	133.3	12	133.3
10	5	500.0	5	166.6	10	333.3
11	5	166.6	3	75.0	8	114.3
12	4	133.3	1	100.0	5	166.6
13	3	100.0	3	300.0	6	200.0
14	3	75.0	1	100.0	4	100.0
15	2	50.0	2	66.6	4	57.1
16	1	33.3	0	0.0	1	12.5
Total	**62**	**119.2**	**50**	**121.9**	**112**	**120.4**

[11] Source: NT Department of Education, 1996 Census of Population and Housing

Key issues of policy concern are

- the potential for overstating the school's actual coverage
- the potential for significantly under-counting the population that should or could be accessing the school in a particular area, when census data is the sole measure relied upon to estimate the available population. As Taylor warns, 'These results suggest that a fair proportion of Aboriginal children may be slipping through the education net, particularly those of secondary age'. (Taylor, 1996: 47)

The review recognises that census data is the most reliable available for NT-wide macro analysis. The review recommends that measures of Indigenous student participation at the community level deploy additional enumeration methods[12] to achieve a more comprehensive profile of the eligible population in a given area.

At a minimum, NTDE reports on participation, in its annual reports and its reporting to the Commonwealth, should be annotated with an explicit acknowledgment of these data shortcomings. (see also ABS 1996: 57-65)

Indigenous staff identification

There are also inconsistencies in the identification of staff as being Indigenous. For example, the position of assistant teacher is a designated Indigenous position, yet as this example table shows, a significant number of people in this position are not recorded on the Department of Education records as being Indigenous.

Table 23: Gapuwiyak teaching staff according to NTDE system records

Position	Number of staff	Number of Indigenous staff	Did not identify
Executive teacher	4	1	1
Teacher	9	1	5
Assistant teacher	10	3	3

The review was assured that staffing information would be more reliably gathered from June 1998 onwards with a new database, the Teacher Information System (TIS). However, at this stage, TIS is unable to yield historical data as the data has not been inputted, nor has it been in place for a full calendar year to enable an interim annual snapshot.

[12] including health, housing, land council, and local government data.

Staff turnover

It proved impossible for the review to gather reliable estimates of the average length of stay (ALOS) of either remote area or urban staff. Anecdotal estimates for remote staff were supplied, suggesting seven months for the southern region, and eighteen months for the northern region. However, this was unable to be verified.

Colin Young cites 1985 research which indicated that the average period of service for non-Aboriginal teachers in Central Australian communities was six months, and in the Top End approximately three years, but went on to note that comprehensive and accurate turnover figures seem not to have been generated since that time. (Young 1996: 34)

The categories used to report on generic staff turnover in the Department of Education Annual Reports are amalgamated in the following ways:

- tenure to six years
- six to ten years
- ten years plus.

The review has found that six years would be an above-average length of stay at a school for non-local staff.

Given the cost and educational implications of staff turnover in schools and the negative impact this has on the provision of quality education programs to Indigenous children, it is critical that high-level attention is paid to the issue, in particular to tracking turnover that is occurring within one and two year timeframes. As discussed earlier in this report, comprehensive strategies need to be developed to reduce staff turnover as a matter of urgency.

Recommendations – Data deficiencies

Attendance data

It is recommended that

131 NTDE clarifies and defines what is categorised as attendance and makes this the standard measure across all schools.

132 NTDE commissions work to cost and develop a comprehensive approach to the tracking of all children to enable tracking of multiple target groups supporting the recommendations under 'Mobility.'

133 the data enables disaggregation to target areas most in need.

134 systems be developed to allow daily participation for Indigenous students to be reliably monitored.

135 all data allows separate analysis of Indigenous attendance and outcomes.

136 attendance information be routinely included in educational outcomes reports to allow key variables to be distinguished.

Participation

It is recommended that

137 NTDE adopts alternate enumeration methods to calculate and report real participation rates.

138 NTDE establishes an agreed population estimate for a particular community via negotiations between the school, health centre and other agencies and organisations with a strong community presence, including housing, local government and the local community council.

Staff Turnover

It is recommended that

139 as a matter of urgency, school transfer and appointments data are analysed to give senior management an immediate and contemporary portrait of staff turnover and the cost to the department to benchmark the impact of wider reforms arising out of this review.

140 resources are dedicated to ensure historical information is included in the Teacher Information System as a matter of priority.

141 reduction in teacher turnover is a formal performance indicator and is regularly reported on at senior management level.

Conclusion: Community partnerships

With some significant exceptions, the outcomes for Indigenous students are unacceptably low. As we near the end of the twentieth century, the extremely poor literacy and numeracy skills of Indigenous students remain a key issue and challenge. The majority of Indigenous students in the Northern Territory are leaving school with literacy outcomes on par with Years 1 and 2 mainstream non-Indigenous children. In 1998, while a majority of Indigenous students—92%—progressed past primary school into some form of junior secondary, only 16.5% moved from junior to senior secondary school. Sixteen school leavers entered university, compared to 469 non-Indigenous students in the same year.[53] This is despite the fact that Indigenous children make up close to 37% of government school enrolment.

Many of the issues and subsequent recommendations identified in the preceding sections of this report point to the need to create more effective partnerships between Indigenous people and the education system, and ultimately the need to pursue greater Indigenous control of that system. As the following contributor observes, negotiation on education needs to take place at a number of levels: within the school community with Indigenous staff and volunteer participants; with community leaders; and more broadly with the key organisations and representative bodies which are significant in the Indigenous domain.

> The quickest and surest way to achieve change in this system is for the people most affected to take action to change it themselves, employing the full range of legal and political remedies available nationally and internationally to people whose rights are being denied. This is unlikely to occur unless the immediate and primary focus of those seeking reform is placed not on the schools, or on the children attending or not attending them, but on the parents and community leaders and organisations who have primary responsibility for the welfare and education of their children and young people. In other words, Indigenous people and their organisations must become more empowered in relation to the education system before real change will occur in this system. (Submission to review)

Increasing the number of skilled and trained Indigenous teachers as a significant part of any effort to improve outcomes has already been canvassed. Equally, the importance of parental or carer involvement in the school cannot be over-estimated. The number of Indigenous people—mostly women—who are already an active presence in schools as volunteers, on the ASSPA committee, at the homework centre, organising and attending school events—should be acknowledged. But Indigenous input into all levels of educational decision making is crucial. In this sense, formal dialogue with Indigenous peak bodies—especially the land councils, community councils and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission—is absolutely essential.

[53] Source: NTDE data

Community and parent involvement

Schwab (1998) provides the following description of schools in Indigenous communities.

> Education is not simply a 'good' brought in from outside, delivered through an institution that stands outside the community, but it is very easy for Aboriginal people to perceive it as such. Though they are typically situated in the centre of town, schools are often a fenced island and while parents and community members are often told they are welcome, it can be a foreign and uncomfortable place. (1998: 17)

The review looked at a number of schools where clear effort is being made to break down the barriers between schools and communities.

Good practice: Community involvement at Areyonga School

This small bilingual bush school is located in the centre of the community and landscaped in such a way as to encourage wider community members to enjoy the school grounds. The physical location of the school is a symbol of its integration with the community it serves. The school delivers its lessons in English and Pitjantjatjara. Strong emphasis is placed in the school on oral English, and reading aloud in both languages is a feature of the school's daily program. Attendance at the school is good because of parental support, 'the parents come to the school, so do the elders, it's always been like that'. The school magazine that has been circulated widely in the community for many years, as well as containing the usual stories and pictures, also contains samples of student's work at the school. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers placed strong emphasis on the value of team teaching at the school. The non-Indigenous teachers valued the cultural understanding and communication skills of the Indigenous teachers, and the Indigenous teachers valued the English skills of the non-Indigenous teachers. The teachers at the school were clearly a small, cohesive, motivated team with high expectations of their students. Learning outcomes in English and mathematics at the school are good—the MAP 'school average' for the senior students has been well above the 'system average' for many years. The school's welcoming and attractive grounds are used for a weekly 'culture day' that is part of the school's educational program, which the review were fortunate to see in action. There was a high degree of enthusiastic involvement of students, staff, parents and the general community in the activity.

But we also encountered schools where the teaching staff and administrators stick to themselves and have very little dialogue with community people outside school hours. This can extend to the Indigenous staff within schools. At one small school, the assistant teachers told the review that during that week,

> ... when the children played up, the (head) teacher left the school and left all the kids to the Yapa [Aboriginal] staff. It makes it really hard. Before he went home, a Yapa teacher (said to him)'you should tell one of the school council members, to talk to the kid,' but he said 'no', he just wanted to go home. We get no help from the community with any problems, the council does not help. And the school superintendent never talks to parents about decisions–he flies in and out and doesn't talk to anyone else.

A common concern voiced by many educators during the review was their sense that while Indigenous parents might insist that they want their children to learn to read, write and progress through the school, they do not seem to know what that entails for them as parents. Most of all, the parents do not seem to understand the connection between regular attendance and academic progression. Equally, Indigenous people told the review that, 'A big problem is that parents have no idea what is happening in schools.' (Submission to review)

The review came across repeated instances where it was clear that Indigenous people were not aware of just how poorly their children compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. There seems to be what one contributor called 'a communicative gulf' in relation to educational issues, driven in part by the historical absence of honest dialogue and lack of disclosure from the NTDE to Indigenous people and the wider community about outcomes. As this contributor put it, ' The feedback to parents is poor—there is a lot of pussy-footing around the issues. Schools breast-beat a lot but there is no honest dialogue'. This past lack of disclosure—not limited to schools but system-wide— was most likely driven by a desire not to be negative and to avoid yet more criticism. While this may have been understandable the review also established a profound and widespread desire amongst Indigenous parents and concerned people to know what is happening and why.

The PAC also urged honest dialogue, stating that

> It should be first made very clear what the current levels of student achievement are and the communities must be advised truthfully what the reasons are for the current failure. They must be given a truthful account of the government's level of commitment to solving these problems and invited to join in their solutions. (PAC 1996: 99)

ASSPA and school councils

The formal mechanisms currently in place for parent input into schools are Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA) committees and school councils. Wherever possible, the review interviewed members of the ASSPA and/or the school council.

School councils deserve particular comment. School councils are the legislated decision-making body within the school community, yet in many cases Indigenous involvement tends to be drawn from the same pool of participants already involved in the ASSPA committees. Few urban school councils appear to be planning for the predictable increases in Indigenous student populations, that are occurring now and will be continuing into the future in all urban regions, and the issues surrounding Indigenous education improvements are infrequently on the agenda, if at all.

Table 24: School decision-making groups

School councils	1997	1998
Total number of representatives	1832	1873
Number of Indigenous representatives	746	841
ASSPAs		
Total number of representatives	1459	1524
Number of Indigenous representatives	1239	1327

Although there has been a steady increase of Indigenous parent involvement on school councils and ASSPA committees, there is little information on the effectiveness of that participation. However, the review is aware that ASSPA is a Commonwealth-funded and administered program which has recently been evaluated by DETYA, and recommends that NTDE liaises closely with DETYA on implementing any key recommendations.

While all schools the review visited had an ASSPA committee, the effectiveness of the ASSPAs varied greatly. As a generalisation, the review found that those case study schools with a positive attitude toward Indigenous student and parent involvement on ASSPA, and more significantly, on the school council, were most likely to be making gains in relation to attendance and, less directly, educational outcomes. Conversely, the review also came across schools which appeared to use ASSPA committees as an opportunistic means of accessing desirable Commonwealth funding—ASSPA attracts some $3.1 million across the Northern Territory per annum. In the words of one remote area Indigenous educator,

> You need to look at empowering people not disempowering people. In the past our administrator leader managing us used to hand pick people for ASSPA and school council because if you do that then you can manipulate those people and use them to your advantage as a rubber stamp. If you are going to have school run effectively, you need to have a school council with eyes, ears and heart of its own, that is there for the school. (Case Study 26)

As with many community associations, a frequent observation by many of those interviewed was that it is always the same few parents who seem to carry the ASSPA. A number of Indigenous parents who had some involvement on the ASSPA committee felt that there was a lot of pressure for Indigenous parents to be involved, and frequent criticism of their small memberships, but not much mention of the difficulties that mainstream school councils also face in getting a range of parents to meetings. Parents may not have much experience with administrations or comfort with formal meeting procedures, and others are just too busy to meet all the demands for volunteer effort that committee membership entails. ASSPA committee members at a primary school described the difficulties facing those Indigenous parents who are employed to do a lot of the operational work of the ASSPA committee, "We really need somebody just to do the general running around, as we have to keep taking time off work."

Community linkages

Active parent participation in children's schooling both at the school and at home is a known characteristic of student success; its absence was widely cited to the review as a part-explanation of poor outcomes.

As part of the review case studies, questions were put to staff exploring the importance of parental awareness, involvement and support. An example was used of a private school which has included a contractual requirement that teachers spend a minimum of two hours on community involvement and participation outside of their classroom hours. Although many of those interviewed agreed on the link between parent support and successful outcomes for Indigenous children, there was not a lot of support for working with parents outside of school hours. However, there were some suggestions that in the event of the department providing more release time to teachers, this idea could be explored further. When questioned on current community linkages, most urban-based staff responded that this is more the role of the AIEW rather than that of the teacher. Indeed, AIEWs and home liaison officers are usually the first option for many schools seeking to improve home–community–school linkages.

Clearly, the cultural shifts required for Indigenous education to become core business for all schools are significant. The review considers drawing Indigenous people into schools to be an across-the-board responsibility that must be tackled from a range of fronts, from school programs and staff training through to decor; and from local to system-level initiatives. Special efforts need to be made to involve Indigenous people with the operating premise that engaging with students, parents, families and community members is the responsibility of all school staff. School environments must be made welcoming for Indigenous people, especially —but not only—the front office areas, the first point of contact for many parents. Just as parents do, the review encountered reception areas displaying Indonesian icons, school trophies and business notices, but nothing to say Indigenous people are a vital and welcome part of the school community. A repeat refrain from many Indigenous parents, especially but not exclusively in urban areas, focused on how intimidating approaching school staff can be. (see also Finders & Lewis, 1994)

The review also came across a number of schools that have been trialing innovative ways of increasing parental awareness and involvement. For instance, Angurugu School provides information to the parents on classroom activities by having a video broadcast at the local shop. Maningrida, Yuendumu, Papunya and Areyonga Schools have regular school-to-community newsletters. Student results and attendance figures are displayed in public places in a number of communities and photos of senior students graduating from courses are publicised.

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Good practice: Student-led conferencing at Tennant Creek Primary

A promising approach to encouraging Indigenous parents to participate in their children's education is found at Tennant Creek Primary School. The school initiated 'student-led conferencing' three years ago as a successful technique to encourage greater parental involvement, to link outcomes with attendance, and as an educational program for the students. The technique is supported by formal resource material and was introduced to the school by one of its teachers who saw it in use in Canada. The conference is held over a full day at the end of the third term. Students prepare for the day at the beginning of the year and throughout the year select examples of their work to showcase for their parents. This preparatory process becomes part of the educational program in the classroom. The school liaises with parents directly, and also with peak bodies such as Jililakari Council, in organising the day. It has a high degree of response from Indigenous parents, and breaks the ice between parents and teachers. To quote one teacher at the school, 'It enthuses the kids, and brings in the parents'.

Indigenous decision making

The review heard several concerns from contributors questioning the processes available for real Indigenous input into educational decision making. As one concerned writer challenged

> What links have been made between the majority of bush schools through their headteacher and the community on education, in the way the Indigenous community controlled health services have in the health field? How many functioning remote school councils are there? What support had the department given to set such councils up? (Submission to review)

As discussed, the predominant form of authority at the school level is the council, where Indigenous parents tend to be represented as members of the advisory structure that is the ASSPA committee. At a Northern Territory level, the key representative forum is the Indigenous Education Council Northern Territory.

The Indigenous Education Council Northern Territory

In 1978 the NT Government, at the instigation of Indigenous people and the Federal Government, established Feppi, the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group. Feppi is a Nganmarriyanga word which means 'rock' or 'foundation'. Because this word was not representative of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the Northern Territory, Feppi was changed to the NT Aboriginal Education Consultative Group. Again, as it was not considered an inclusive term the council members unanimously agreed in 1996 to change the name to Indigenous Education Council Northern Territory (IECNT). The IECNT is jointly funded by the Commonwealth Government and the NT Government and has a global budget of $709 000.

The primary role of the IECNT is to advise the Minister for Education on the educational and training needs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Northern Territory. The IECNT also acts as a conduit for the promotion of Indigenous community needs, issues and concerns across all sectors of education within the Northern Territory and at the national level.

IECNT's Vision/ Mission Statement is to

'Advance in truth, provide quality advice, ensure quality outcomes in education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the Northern Territory'

Advice for the Minister is obtained through networking with communities, governments and independent providers within the education and training sectors. This networking/consultation process assists in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies, legislation and standards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the local, regional, State and national levels.

The review met with the IECNT and separately with the Secretariat.

During the public hearings process a number of people raised concerns about appointments to the IECNT and some internal office procedures of the Secretariat. The review followed up these concerns directly with the Secretariat and found there were significant problems associated with the management of the operational budget. The matter is now in the process of being resolved in consultation with NTDE. Of greater concern is the current recruitment and selection processes in the Secretariat. The review considers as completely unsatisfactory the practice of continually extending the tenure of temporary employees for long periods when the positions should have been advertised and permanently filled. Such practices reduce the opportunity for the Secretariat to draw from as large a field of appropriately qualified applicants as possible. All vacant positions in the IECNT Secretariat need to be reviewed to enable open contestation and the application of the merit principle.

The review also received criticism of appointments to the council that mirror concern reflected in the PAC Report No.27. This is an important issue as a key role of the IECNT is to be a broadly representative body of the Indigenous education constituency of the Northern Territory, and to act as a direct link to the Minister.

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The process to replace the existing council is due to begin again in December this year. The basic process consists of the IECNT first calling for nominations for appointment to the council. Advertisements are placed in the media and direct mail is sent to all relevant communities and organisations. No limit is placed on the number of people that can be listed on a single nomination—there only needs to be a single nominator, and self-nomination is permitted. After nominations are received, the IECNT itself considers the nominations and prepares a short list that is sent to the Minister for his approval and formal ministerial appointment. The list can, and has, included the names of members of the incumbent council themselves.

This process is flawed and should be discontinued immediately. Few Ministers could be reasonably expected to know the individuals on their short list to the same extent the incumbent members of the IECNT would know them. More importantly, they could not be expected to know the backgrounds and skills of what may be the much larger group of nominees rejected by the incumbents themselves. A clear and obvious conflict of interest is involved with sitting members being able, as a body, to take part in a process that could and has, led to their own reappointment and the rejection of others. However worthy these appointments may have been the process needs to be radically changed. The restructuring should ensure that while a proper place is provided for the advice of the incumbent IECNT and Secretariat, a third party should lead the process. The nomination process itself also needs to be restructured to ensure nominees enjoy some measure of community support and to guarantee greater fairness overall.

One option that could be considered would be to provide for only one nominee per form and a requirement that the nomination be supported by a minimum of ten signatories—not including the nominee—who are enrolled on the Northern Territory Electoral Role. Suggestions have been made in the past to hold elections for the positions in conjunction with the ATSIC elections. It is difficult to justify such a proposal, and ATSIC may not care to have its own issues confused from time-to-time with those of the IECNT. One workable option that could be considered is to have all nominations examined, and a short list forwarded to the Minister, by the Director of the Aboriginal Education Branch in consultation with the Chair of the IECNT and the Executive Officer of the Secretariat.

The review recommends the complete restructuring of the IECNT based to some extent on the successful model of the Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory.

In the event the Government does not support this major recommendation at this time, the imminent reappointment of the existing council should not proceed under the current arrangements, and a thorough review of the IECNT and its Secretariat should be conducted on behalf of the Northern Territory Government and Commonwealth Government.

The new Indigenous Education Council of the Northern Territory

The review is proposing the establishment of a new Indigenous peak body to develop broad policy parameters for Indigenous education across all schools, provide advice to the Minister and DETYA and oversee the budget for the delivery of the Self-Managing Schools Program. A number of proposals are made for consideration in the initial establishment and transitional phase of the Indigenous Education Council of the Northern Territory (IECNT).

In the first instance the council should be constituted by a partnership between the NTDE, the Northern Territory tertiary sector, ATSIC and the land councils. The partnership would be based on a formal, negotiated agreement, signed by the parties, detailing agreed objectives of the council, roles of the parties, the strategic plan for achieving the objectives, and all the necessary administrative and budget arrangements.

An immediate responsibility of the council would be to oversight and support the establishment of the pilot regional/community-based educational partnerships proposed by the review. In the short to medium term the council would bring these pilot partnerships to the point where they can act as role models for other communities and regions. Over the longer term the council would be charged with the responsibility of extending those arrangements across the whole of the Northern Territory. Processes would be established to provide for the community/regional bodies to be progressively represented on the council itself.

ATSIC is the peak, democratically elected representative body for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory. Members of the ATSIC Northern and Southern Zone Councils have particular responsibility for areas of policy which impact on Indigenous Territorians. ATSIC has a direct interest in Indigenous education and made formal submissions to the PAC inquiry that reported in 1996 and again to this review. The review met with the ATSIC State Policy Committee. ATSIC is already represented on the Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory.

Over the past twenty years the land councils of the Northern Territory have understandably given priority to their statutory responsibility to secure land for Indigenous Territorians under the provisions of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. In more recent years the councils have also assisted landowners in the management of that land and in helping to create economic opportunities for Indigenous people. The councils have also moved in a responsible way to assist in the environmental protection of the land and its flora and fauna. The Northern Land Council for example has established the 'Caring for Country' unit devoted to that purpose. It is involved in the 'Djelk Rangers' service at Maningrida which has an important 'two-way learning' ethos. The land councils have therefore a direct stake in assisting and promoting improved outcomes in Indigenous education and training. The review notes the recent iniatives to establish more common ground between the Northern Territory Government and its agencies and the land councils. Improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students is already common ground.

It would be necessary for the IECNT to engage in close cooperation with other agencies highlighted in this report as having a direct role to play in education. The council would need to work hand-in-glove with two agencies that are pre-eminent in this regard. The Northern Territory agency of most importance to the council is Ter ritory Health Services. THS is already well advanced in giving Indigenous Territorians a direct role in the delivery of health services. The Coordinated Care Trials in Katherine and in the Tiwi Islands, and the tripartite Health Forum, are already showing positive results. Similarly, the Commonwealth Government, through DETYA, has a central role to play in its range of programs supporting education services. In particular, new Commonwealth initiatives mentioned elsewhere are focused on key recommendations of this review. The Council Secretariat would need to have an ongoing working relationship with these two agencies, and it would be advantageous for them to be directly represented whenever appropriate at council meetings. The council would also need to work closely and cooperatively with other providers of educational services for Indigenous children. Catholic schools are by far the largest non-government providers.

The review has emphasised the importance of establishing formal relationships between education and health services at a community level. In the light of representations made to the review during community visits there may well be a local preference to combine health and education issues on one committee. In a number of communities the same local people are active in both areas. There would be clear advantages in this arrangement in providing for better coordination on an ongoing basis and at the same time helping to avoid people becoming 'committeed out'. Where this is the locally preferred option, the framework established for the council needs to be flexible enough for this to happen.

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Self-Managing Schools Program

The review was commissioned to provide the Northern Territory Department of Education with sufficient information to formulate a five-year plan of action as part of a longer term twenty-year strategy for Indigenous education in the Northern Territory.

Good practice: Community involvement - school management at Papunya

In 1992 the Papunya school reached a crisis with only eighteen students attending school. A radically new approach was adopted with strong engagement between the school and the local community. Under an active and engaged Indigenous school council, and committed staff and principal, attendance at the school climbed to the present level of around 180 students and outcomes have progressively improved. The school is using an action research model to continue the development of an inclusive Indigenous pedagogical curriculum. An initiative at the school that the review did not see elsewhere were regular lessons being conducted in the homes of Indigenous staff between 5.00pm and 7.00pm on Tuesday and Thursday nights. A resource box containing ESL ILSS and other material is maintained at the school and is taken to the homes as required. When the review visited, around seventeen students were attending these lessons which concentrated upon oral English, literacy and preventative health.

The review has established there are major service provision gaps in the early childhood and secondary sectors. In the primary arena, the educational impasse is not so much from lack of infrastructure but from lack of systems which allow school communities and principals to aggregate the resourcing available to distribute it to best effect, tied to agreed attendance and participation commitments. We have also found that there is a significant risk of under-enrolment in the compulsory school-age population group and that schools need greater flexibility in terms of offering interesting and challenging options for older students and adults in the post-compulsory schooling arena. School principals are a key part of the process, as is the establishment of a safe and welcoming school environment where students are guaranteed that the teacher expectations of them will be high. NTDE needs to allow school principals the opportunity to be flexible and creative in the way they deliver and resource school programs. Provision must also be made for community control over educational decision-making processes, while establishing clear benchmarks for expected improvements.

It is recommended that NTDE negotiates with the Commonwealth to resource and establish pilot regional/community-based educational partnerships in remote area communities, under the auspices of the IECNT. The aim of the pilots would be to establish educational partnerships with appropriate community leadership. The pilots could be established in community schools, or in cluster schools within linguistically and culturally affiliated regions. Local area management of the pilots would be conducted by locally constituted community/regional education committeess. These committees will require management training and support during their establishment phase.

Components that should be negotiated in agreements to establish the pilots include

- a strategy to improve attendance and retention
- flexible school times and flexible school terms, e.g. meeting ceremonial obligations, based on community negotiation and commitment and meeting bottom-line system requirements
- negotiation with local agencies and organisations to secure conditions supportive of full attendance, e.g. shop opening hours, sporting commitments
- clear goals for student improvement in English oracy, literacy and numeracy
- best practice in ESL teaching
- curriculum that is sequential, easy to follow and not cluttered with supplementary support material
- the establishment of multipurpose early childhood centres
- strategies for ensuring an acoustically sound learning environment
- a clear strategy for increasing the number of fully trained and effective Indigenous staff in teaching, decision making and support positions in the school(s)
- an attractive teacher recruitment package which includes performance agreements
- performance agreements with the principal which acknowledge the role as senior representative of the NTDE in the community
- clear linkages between key service providers and employers in the community to ensure articulation into jobs and service coordination
- the development of data systems that allows for aggregated and disaggregated data to monitor and meet the challenges arising from student mobility; performance information to track improvements; costing analysis to allow informed decisions on the range of educational choices the pilot puts in place
- agreement to resource the school(s) to enable achievement of the agreed target outcomes
- such resourcing to include a component for tightly focused professional development and/or recruitment programs to ensure that competent staff are in place

Local Government – The Next Step

The review notes the reforms proposed for local government in Indigenous communities in the document *Local Government - The Next Step* . The reforms propose a model of local government administration titled 'Federated Bi-cameral.' The key features being that the structure would have

- grouping of current 'communities'
- share a community of interest, language, an area of land, or social or economic needs.

The administration would consist of two chambers, the 'First' being nominated by clan groups and landowners. This chamber would deal with land matters, traditional leadership, cultural maintenance, and policy parameters. It would have complete power of veto over decisions of the ' Second' chamber.

The 'Second' chamber would be an elected chamber. This chamber would deal with all of the normal management, administrative and service obligations of a conventional town council.

This proposal is a replica of the model of local government which was introduced by the Indigenous community at Galiwin'ku almost thirty years ago. At Galiwin 'ku, the 'Mala Leaders' who are the senior traditional land/ceremony owners, constitute the ' First' chamber. The 'Second' chamber is the conventional town council, which often consists of much younger people. David Burramurra MBE, who was a powerful, highly intelligent, and charismatic Indigenous leader, compared these two chambers when they were established with the Federal House of Representatives and Senate chambers. A most remarkable comparison from an Indigenous leader in remote Arnhem Land almost thirty years ago. The 'Mala Leaders' were of course the Senate, and had complete and unquestioned power of veto over all matters considered by the ' Second' chamber (including Supply!).

The particular interest of the review in this reform which it strongly endorses, is the obvious synergy between this proposed structure and the review 's recommendations for Indigenous involvement and ownership of the delivery of education services to Indigenous students in the Northern Territory.

Recommendations – Community partnerships

The Indigenous Education Council Northern Territory

It is recommended that

142 the IECNT be completely restructured.

143 in the event of the Government not supporting this major recommendation at this time, the imminent reappointment of the existing council not proceed and a thorough review be conducted on behalf of the Northern Territory Government and Commonwealth Government.

The new Indigenous Education Council of the Northern Territory

It is recommended that

144 the Indigenous Education Council of the Northern Territory be established as a partnership between NTDE, the Northern Territory tertiary sector, ATSIC, and the land councils. All parties must be represented on the council at senior level.

145 the council develops broad policy parameters for Indigenous education across all schools, provides advice to the Minister and DETYA and oversees the budget for the delivery of the Self-Managing Schools Program.

146 an immediate responsibility of the council is to oversee and support the establishment of the pilots of the Self-Managing Schools Program and progressively extend these arrangements across the Northern Territory.

147 the council works closely with Territory Health Services and DETYA. The Council Secretariat must have an ongoing working relationship with these two agencies and when appropriate they should be directly represented at meetings of the council. The council must also work closely with other providers of educational services to Indigenous students.

148 the council be responsible for overseeing the implementation of agreed recommendations of this review.

Self-Managing Schools Program

It is recommended that

149 the pilot Self-Managing Schools Program be established under the auspices of the Indigenous Education Council of the Northern Territory.

150 the program framework be flexible enough to allow community or regionally based arrangements incorporating the individual requirements of the communities concerned.

151 the program takes every opportunity to work in partnership with other community controlled initiatives.

Appendixes

1 Listing of formal and informal interviews, meetings and forums attended

2 Listing of written and audio submissions

3 Case study and consultation methodology used by the review

4 Consent form and questionnaire used by the review

5 Selected reports and inquiries into Indigenous education accessed by the review

6 Indigenous education expenditure estimates

7 NT strategic results projects

8 Bilingual programs: school and Indigenous Australian languages

Appendix 1

Listing of formal and informal interviews, meetings and forums attended

Date of Interview	Person(s) interviewed/consulted	Title/Company
09.02.99	Dr Robert G. Schwab	Anthropologist Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University
09.02.99	Kez Hall	Director, Public Health Strategy Unit Territory Health Services
16.02.99	Rita Henry	Executive Officer Curriculum and Assessment Task Group Department of Education
16.02.99	Cecil Neilson	Manager Indigenous Education Strategic Initiative Program Curriculum Projects Department of Education
16.02.99	Alan Day, Tanya Nasir & Frank Proctor	Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program Department of Education
17.02.99	Kathy Flint	Manager Parliamentary Library
17.02.99 20.04.99	Paul Bubb & Kathy McMahon	Bilingual Consultant Officer Teacher Linguist Mentor Department of Education
18.02.99 23.03.99 01.04.99	Chris Ross	Manager Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educators' Support Unit Department of Education
22.02.99 05.03.99	Peter Jones	Director Aboriginal Education Department of Education
01.03.99	Peter Winckler	Ministerial Officer Office of the Minister for Education
02.03.99 01.09.99	Sue Reaburn	Manager Mentor Program, Curriculum Advisory Support Unit Department of Education
02.03.99	Joy Phillips	Assistant Manager, Curriculum Advisory Support Unit
02.03.99 09.09.99	Peter Buckskin	Assistant Secretary Indigenous Education Branch Department of Employment, Training & Youth Affairs
02.03.99	Dr William Griffiths Sister Trudy Keur	Director Catholic Education Office Darwin Assistant Director Curriculum and Professional Development Catholic Education Office Darwin
03.03.99	Claude Cellegoi	Executive Officer Schools Policy Department of Education
03.03.99	Gregory Moo	Director Projects and Consulting Department of Corporate and Information Services
04.03.99	Wal Czernezkyj & Katherine Henderson	Secretary Department of Education Deputy Secretary School Services Division Department of Education

05.03.99	Sen Huang	Principal Research Officer, Curriculum Services Branch Department of Education
08.03.99	David Parish	Consultant
08.03.99	David Murphy, Kierin Cassidy & Sheila Delahay	Teacher Staffing Department of Education
08.03.99 24.03.99	Pip Hodge	Senior Executive Officer Staff Development English as a Second Language/Multicultural Department of Education
09.03.99	Coralyn Armstrong & Tracey Masterton	Director of Human Resource Development Research Officer Human Resource Development Department of Education
09.03.99	Joy Phillips & Lorraine Evans	Assistant Manager, Curriculum Advisory Support Unit First Steps Projects Officer, Curriculum Advisory Support Unit, Department of Education
09.03.99 29.03.99 29.07.99	Peter Plummer	Secretary Territory Health Services
10.03.99	Cecily Willis & nda Miller	Moderators Foundation and General Studies Board of Studies Services Division Department of Education
10.03.99	John Yick	Manager Demography Department of Education
12.03.99	Linda King, Alan Giles & Shirley Biocci	Director Operational Support Operational Support Staff Department of Education
12.03.99	Gary Lambert	Special Projects Office Operational Support Branch Department of Education
15.03.99	Dianne DeVere	Principal Papunya School
15.3.99	Robyn Freeman, Robert Hoogengraad, Melodie Batt, Ruth Gledhill, Tim Webb, Margaret Kesbie, Zoe Morgan, Geoff Sloan & Rosalie Korman	Staff Support Unit Department of Education Alice Springs
16.03.99	Jill Totham	Project Officer Student Welfare Centralian College
16.03.99	Pat Dodds and Senior Management Team	Board Member Institute for Aboriginal Development
17.03.99	Robert Hoogenraad	Senior Linguist Department of Education (located at I Institute for Aboriginal Development
17.03.99	Dr Bob Boughton	Education Researcher Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal & Tropical Health Menzies School of Health Research
17.03.99	Noel Coutts	General Manager Area 1 Alice Springs Department of Education

17.03.99	Ken Davies	Acting Director Aboriginal Education Department of Education
17.03.99	Russell Totham	General Manager Operations Department of Education Alice Springs
18.03.99	Ralph Wiese	Regional Director Health and Education Department of Education Alice Springs
18.03.99 21.05.99	Colin McGavisk	Project Manager, SA review of Bilingual in Anungu Schools
19.03.99	Craig Drury	Senior Legal Services Officer Department of Education
22.03.99	Michael F. Christie	Faculty of Education NT University
22.03.99	Sue Reaburn & Katherine West	Manager Mentor Program, Curriculum Advisory Support Unit Research Consultant Jawoyn Association
22.03.99	Wal Czernezkyj	Secretary Department of Education
23.03.99	Gavin Wrigley	Principal Don Dale Education Centre
26.03.99 28.04.99	Lyn Bigg & Kelly Green	English as a Second Language Teachers Gray Primary School
26.03.99	John Baldock	Assistant Principal Palmerston High School
29.03.99	Robert Lee John Fletcher Katherine Wells	Director Deputy Director Consultant Jawoyn Association
29.03.99	Veronica Arbon, John Ingram, Ron Watt, Alison Bullock, Robyn Hurley, Maree Klesch, David McClay, Charlie Djordilla, Jim Meehan, Jenny Madden, Kathy Deveraux, Sandrah Darcy	Batchelor College Staff
30.03.99	Sister Trudy Keur, Juliet Hubbard & Susan Brogan	Catholic Education Office Winnellie
30.03.99	Parents and Students	Acacia Community
30.03.99	Steve Sjoberg	Principal NT Open Education Centre
30.03.99	Jan Plummer	Education Coordinator Royal Darwin Hospital Children's ward school room
31.03.99	Bruce Pickering, David Smith & Phillip Belletty	Facilities Management Department of Education
01.04.99 16.04.99	Helen Southam	Principal Ludmilla Primary School

07.04.99 27.08.99	Fran Murray	Manager, English as a Second Language for Indigenous Language Speaking Students Curriculum Advisory Support Unit
08.04.99	John Dove	Superintendent Secondary Department of Education
08.04.99	Robert Laird Mark Crossin	President Australian Education Union Secretary Australian Education Union
12.04.99	Students David McClay John Ingram	School of Education & Adult Education Deputy Director Batchelor College Director Batchelor College
12.04.99	Carolyn Crabbe	Ernst & Young & Associates Darwin
14.04.99 28.04.99	Mary Fox	Superintendent Darwin Central Department of Education
14.04.99	Tony Barnes	National Director National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics Australian Bureau of Statistics
20.04.99	Paul Bubb	Bilingual Consultation Officer Department of Education
20.04.99 09.09.99	Dr David Kemp	Federal Minister for Education Training and Youth Affairs
20.04.99	Steven Langhouse	Head Teacher Willowra School
21.04.99	Melodie Bat	Early Literacy Project Officer Alice Springs Office Department of Education
21.04.99	Teachers	School of the Air Alice Springs
22.04.99	Merridy Malin	Faculty of Education NT University Alice Springs Campus
22.04.99	Ann Davis & Karen Gillepsie	Batchelor College Alice Springs Campus
29.04.99	Rob Hitchcock	Branch Secretary Hospitality & Miscellaneous Workers Union
29.04.99	Glenda Sharp	Principal Humpty Doo School
29.04.99	Anne Sailor	Chairperson Malak ASSPA
30.04.99	Wally Mauger	Superintendent Palmerston Department of Education
30.04.99 20.07.99 19.08.99	Barbara Henderson	Senior Education Officer Indigenous Secondary Education Department of Education
17.02.99 10.05.99	Barry Griffin	Principal Jabiru School
14.05.99	Brian Delandes, Maria Marriner, Judith Green, Nola Pearce, John Rowe, Helen Taylor, Liz Mellick	Principal, Sport, Health and Physical Education School EO Health and Drug education Special Projects and disABILITY Drug Abuse Resistance Education Police Officer Executive officer School Sport NT Administration Officer School Sport NT

04.06.99	Mai Catona	Menzies School of Health Research, Aboriginal Health Unit Territory Health Services
04.06.99	Peter Swan	Manager Human Resources Management Department of Education Alice Springs
08.06.00	Peter Toyne MLA	Member for Stuart
15.06.99	Peter Clarke	Principal Gray Primary School
16.06.99	Professor John Bern	Professor Sociology Woollongong University
22.06.99	David Bogie Caroline Smith	Teachers
25.06.99	David McClay	Deputy Director Batchelor College
25.06.99	Nick Scarvelis Suzanne Lollback	CEO Economic & Community Development Director Economic & Community Development Alice Springs Town Council
01.07.99	Carmel O'Shannessy	Teacher Linguist Lajamanu Community Education Centre
07.07.99	Graham Gee	Batchelor Community Based Lecturer Ngukurr Community Education Centre
16.07.99	Bruce Harvey	General Manager Aboriginal & Community Relations Rio Tinto
19.07.99	Anne Clifford	Manager Evaluation and Review Department of Education
19.07.99	Professor Brian Devlin	Dean Education NT University
20.07.99	Alan Haines	Manager of Indigenous Education Department of Employment, Training & Youth Affairs
28.07.99	Mark Wellington Pat Brahim Dr Fergal Fleming	Area Manager, Centrelink Indigenous Strategic Advisor, Centrelink Manager Social Security Group Department of Family and Community Services
28.07.99	Hon Michael Lee MP Senator Trish Crossin	Shadow Minister for Education Senator for the Northern Territory
28.07.99	Patsy Creswick	Project Officer Assessment & Teaching in the Early Years of School Department of Education
29.07.99	Di Russell	Assistant Principal (Secondary) Anangu Education Services Ernabella
30.07.99	Brian Webb Adam Gordon	Project Management Consultancy Team Desliens Business Consultants
02.08.99	Ken Wyatt	Director Indigenous Education Education Department of Western Australia
03.08.99	Leonie Jones	Cross-Cultural Training Coordinator Department of Education
06.08.99	Dr Andrew Giles-Peters	Manager of Development and Assessment Northern Territory Police

09.08.99	Professor Colin J Bourke	Professional Fellow Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies
11.08.99	Greg Bonson & staff	Indigenous Education Department of Employment Training and Youth Affairs
18.08.99	Graham Symons	CEO Housing and Local Government
18.08.99	Bruce March Helen Crawford	Family and Children Services Territory Health Services
20.08.99	Rita Harvey	Deputy Secretary Strategic Services and Operations Division Department of Education
27.08.99	Helen Crawford Mary Fox Patsy Creswick Colleen Bremner	The Framework Implementation Group (for implementing the THS/NTDE Agreement) Territory Health Services and Education
27.08.99	Graham Quan	Director Budget and Reporting Branch Department of Education
30.08.99	Maria Stevens	Executive Officer Indigenous Education Council NT
01.09.99	Don Zoellner	Principal Alice Springs High School
01.09.99	Melanie van Haaren	Strategy 21 Project Officer Territory Health Services
09.09.99	Maruis Purutatamen Jimmy Tipungwuti Walter Kennaiua Matthew Wonaeamirn Cyriol Rioli	Tiwi Land Council
09.09.99	Steve McWilliams	Principal Xavier CEC

Date of Forum/ Meeting	**Name of Forum/Meeting**
23.02.99 22.04.99	Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers Workshop
24.02.99	Indigenous Education Council Northern Territory Cross-Sectoral Working Party
25.02.99	Cross-Cultural Working Party
30.03.99	Catholic Education Principals
08.03.99	Mentors workshop
06.03.99	English as a Second Language Special Area Committee
16.03.99	ESL Special Area Committee Meeting
17.03.99	Indigenous Education Council Northern Territory Regional Forum
19.03.99	NT University Conference on Bilingual Education and Child Development
19.03.99	NT University Lecture on English as a Second Language
22.03.99 01.09.99	Indigenous Education review Working Party meeting

25.03.99	Aboriginal Mining Enterprise Task Force of the NT
29.03.99	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission State Policy Committee
31.03.99	Gifted Association meeting
19.04.99	Warlpiri Triangle Meeting
08.04.99 21.04.99	Indigenous Education Workshop
04.06.99	Small Schools Conference
20.04.99	The Australian & New Zealand Health Management Network
02.05.99	1999 Australian Education Union-NT Branch Annual Conference
10.05.99	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Public Hearing on Rural & Remote Education
11.05.99	Indigenous Education Standing Committee, NT Board of Studies
20.05.99	Alice Springs Public Meeting
22.05.99	Tennant Creek Public Meeting
26.05.99	Home Tutors Conference
02.06.99	Miwatj Regional Council
15.06.99	Darwin Public Meeting, North Australian Research Unit
16.05.99	Education Advisory Council
16.06.99	Aboriginal Resource and Development Services
22.06.99	Top End Linguistics Society Meeting
02.07.99	Indigenous Education Council NT
19.07.99	Senior Executive Team -Department of Education
27.07.99	Indigenous Education Strategic Initiative Program Review Workshop
06.08.99	Senate Inquiry into Aboriginal Education
14.08.99	NT Open Education Centre Residential at Dripstone High School
22.08.99	Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program 1999 Challenge Finals
23.08.99	Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee Inc
06.09.99	Aboriginal Education Review Reading Team Meeting
08.09.99	NT Board of Studies

Appendix 2

Listing of written and audio submissions

Mr Ron Abbott	Principal Driver Primary School PO Box 33 PALMERSTON NT 0831
Ms Donna Ah Chee	Director Institute for Aboriginal Development PO Box 2531 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Mr John Amadio	Principal Nyangatjatjara College PO Box 19 YULARA NT 0872
Ms Veronica Arbon	Director Batchelor College Post Office BATCHELOR NT 0845
Ms Wendy Baarda	Yuendumu via ALICE SPRINGS NT 0872
Mr Bill Baird	Community Development Officer McArthur River Mining Pty Ltd PO Box 36821 WINNELLIE NT 0821
Mr Jonathon Barker	Assistant Principal Nungalinya College PO Box 40371 CASUARINA NT 0811
Ms Melodie Bat	Project Officer Targeting Early Literacy - Family and School PO Box 1420 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Bawinanga Djelk Rangers	Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation Maningrida PMB 102 WINNELLIE NT 0822
Mr R J Beadman	Chief Executive Officer Office of Aboriginal Development GPO Box 4450 DARWIN NT 0801
Ms Pam Bettison	Project Officer NT VET in Rural and Remote Areas Northern Territory Open Education Centre PO Box 40471 CASUARINA NT 0811
Ms Sheila Bizley	ESL Teacher Gillen Primary School PO Box 769 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Mr Peter Blake	Secretary Department of Mines and Energy GPO Box 2901 DARWIN NT 0801
Mr Barry Borneman	Director The Summer Institute of Linguistics Australian Aborigines and Islanders Branch C/- Post Office Box BERRIMAH NT 0828
Dr Bob Boughton	Indigenous Education Research Fellow CRC for Indigenous and Tropical Health Menzies School of Health Research Central Australian Unit PO Box 8569 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Mr Hugh Bradley	Chief Magistrate for the Northern Territory GPO Box 1281 DARWIN NT 0801
Ms Judy Brumby	School Council President Areyonga (Utju) School via ALICE SPRINGS NT 0872
Ms Carolyn Bursa	Principal Northern Territory School of Languages Nightcliff High School Campus Nightcliff Road NIGHTCLIFF NT 0810

Michael Calwell	Address not supplied
Ms Joanna Caramella	The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Australia GPO Box 4821 DARWIN NT 0801
Ms Louise Carey	Special Education Teacher Lajamanu Community Education Centre PMB 63 KATHERINE NT 0852
Mr Michael F Christie	Faculty of Education Northern Territory University DARWIN NT 0909
Mr John Clarke	NT Community Services and Health Industry Training Advisory Board Inc PO Box 1557 DARWIN NT 0801
Ms Maria Clarke	President Wanguri Primary School ASSPA PO Box 40519 CASUARINA NT 0811
Mr Lester Coyne	Chairperson FATSIL Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation of Languages PO Box 1429 BEENLEIGH QLD 4207
Mr Greg Crowe	PO Box 721 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Mr Joseph Daby	Chairperson NT Aboriginal Hearing Program Coordinating Committee Inc PO Box 40596 CASUARINA NT 0811
Ms Rose Ngardiny Darcy	Chairperson Maningrida CEC PMB 67 WINNELLIE NT 0822
Ms Gail Dawson	Principal Maningrida CEC PMB 67 WINNELLIE NT 0822
Mr Brian Delvin	Northern Territory University DARWIN NT 0909
Ms Diane De Vere	Principal Papunya School & Community PMB 77 via ALICE SPRINGS NT
Linda Devow	Address not supplied
Ms Valerie Dhaykamalu	Principal Elcho Island PMB 74 WINNELLIE NT 0822
Ms Rita Djitmu	c/- Maningrida CEC PMB 67 WINNELLIE NT 0821
Ms Robyn Elliott	Regional Director Northern Territory Australian Bureau of Statistics GPO Box 3796 DARWIN NT 0801
Mr Peter Fisher	Director Anglicare Top End PO Box 36506 WINNELLIE NT 0821
Ms Margot Ford	Lecturer Faculty of Education Northern Territory University DARWIN NT 0909
Mr Gary Fry	Head Teacher Peppimenarti School PMB 49 WINNELLIE NT 0822

Mr Richard Galton	Secretary Department of Sport and Recreation GPO Box 1448 DARWIN NT 0801
Mr Peter Geddes	Mine Superintendent Union Reefs Gold Mine PO Box 194 PINE CREEK NT 0847
Ms Fay Genuth	Acting Principal Yirara College PMB 51 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0872
Mr Ray Godwin	Health, Special Education Coordinator Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School Wadeye (Port Keats) PMB 144 WINNELLIE NT 0821
Mr William Griffiths	Director Catholic Education Office PO Box 219 BERRIMAH NT 0828
Rev A G Hall	Synod Secretary The Uniting Church in Australia Northern Synod GPO Box 717 DARWIN NT 0801
Ms Lee Ann Hally	Mining Employment Officer Central Land Council PO Box 3321 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Ms Lesley Hansen	PO Box 2129 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0872
Mr Alan Harrison	Normandy NFM Limited PO Box 8020 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Ms Elizabeth Hart	Hodgson River Station PMB 35 KATHERINE NT 0852
Mr Kerry Heisner	Australian Electoral Officer For the Northern Territory Australian Electoral Commission GPO Box 21 DARWIN NT 0801
Mr Rob Hitchcock	Branch Secretary Australian Liquor, Hospitality & Miscellaneous Workers Union GPO Box 32 DARWIN NT 0801
Ms Pip Hodge	Curriculum Advisory Support Unit NT Department of Education
Mr Robert Hoogenraad	Linguist Department of Education PO Box 1420 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Ms Belinda Hoult	Curriculum Advisory Support Unit Department of Education GPO Box 4821 DARWIN NT 0801
Ms Donna Howard	Coordinator Indigenous Programs review Katherine High School PO Box 189 KATHERINE NT 0851
Ms Catherine Hunt	Acting Director Nothern Territory Library & Information Service GPO Box 42 DARWIN NT 0801
Ms Jan Jardine	Numbulwar CEC PMB 68 via KATHERINE NT 0852
Ms Judy King	Principal Jilkminggan School Council & ASSPA Committee PMB 54 KATHERINE NT 0852
Mr Robert Laird	Australian Education Union NT Branch GPO Box 4494 DARWIN NT 0801

Ms Anne Lanham	Kaltukatjara PMB 49 via ALICE SPRINGS NT 0872
Dr Velma J Leeding	Umbakumba PO Box 313 ALYANGULA NT 0885
Ms Mernidy Malin	Senior Lecturer Northern Territory University Faculty of Education PO Box 795 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Mr Ross Mandi	Chairperson Milingimbi CEC School Council PMB 54 WINNELLIE NT 0822
Ms Wyn Manners	Coordinator Maningrida Jet Centre PMB 102 WINNELLIE NT 0821
Ms Dhuwarrwaarr Markia	Acting Chairperson Northern Land Council Women's Committee PO Box 42921 CASUARINA NT 0811
Mr Gerry McCue	Aboriginal Economic Development Advisory Committee GPO Box 4450 DARWIN NT 0801
Mr Dave McHugh	Deputy Secretary Infrastructure Department of Transport and Works GPO Box 2520 DARWIN NT 0801
Br Frank McIntosh	Principal Ltyentye Apurte CEC Santa Teresa via ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Ms Kathy McMahon	Curriculum Advisory Support Unit Department of Education GPO Box 4821 DARWIN NT 0801
Mr Stephen Mellor	Unit 80 C/- Royal Darwin Hospital Staff Village TIWI NT 0810
Mr Peter Moore	Principal Numbulwar CEC PMB 68 via KATHERINE NT 0852
Dr Ian Morgan	President Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc PO Box 323 CURTIN ACT 2605
Ms Zoe Morgan	Homeland Learning Centre Project Officer Department of Education PO Box 1420 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Mr Leigh Mullin	Principal Ramingining CEC PMB 125 Ramingining via DARWIN NT 0822
Mr Simon Niblock	LPC Supervison Shepherdson CEC Elcho Island PMB 74 WINNELLIE NT 0822
Mr Tobias Nganbe	Aboriginal Leadership Team Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School Wadeye (Port Keats) PMB 144 WINNELLIE NT 0821
Ms Noeline Laurie	Advisory Teacher Early Intervention NT Department of Education PO Box 1420 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Ms Sue Reaburn	Urban Based Indigenous Teacher Education Support Program Department of Education/Batchelor College Working Party
Mr George Pascoe	Aboriginal Action Group PMB 67 WINNELLIE NT 0822

Ms Kath Phelen	Executive Director Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory GPO Box 2085 DARWIN NT 0801
Mr Colin Plowman	Acting General Manager Economic Division Aboriginal and Torrest Strait Islander Commission PO Box 17 WODEN ACT 2606
Mr Peter Plummer	Chief Executive Officer Territory Health Services PO Box 40596 CASUARINA NT 0811
Mr Mike Popple	Town Clerk Wugularr Community Government Council PMB 26 via KATHERINE NT 0851
Ms Carolyn Preece	Teacher IESIP Alice Springs School of the Air PO Box 1220 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Mr Mike Puccetti	Principal Umbakumba School PO Box 698 ALYANGULA NT 0885
Ms Teresita Puruntatameri	Principal Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School Nguiu Bathurst Island via WINNELLIE NT 0822
Mr Steve Ridgway	Address not supplied
Mr Ian Roberts	Faculty of Science & Education Northern Territory University DARWIN NT 0909
Mr David & Lily Roennfeldt	PMB 4 HERMANNSBURY NT 0872
Mr John Scally	Northern Territory Open Education Centre PO Box 40471 CASUARINA NT 0811
SHAPES	Sport, Health and Physical Education School GPO Box 408921 CASUARINA NT 0811
Mr Chris Sidoti	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission GPO Box 5218 SYDNEY NT 1042
Mr Howard Smith	Kaltukatjara Community PMB 49 via ALICE SPRINGS NT 0872
Hon Warren Snowdon MP	Member for the House of Representatives Northern Territory PO Box 40100 CASUARINA NT 0811
The Chairperson	Warlpiri Triangle Willowra CEC PMB 102 via ALICE SPRINGS NT 0870
Mr Syd Stirling MLA	Member for Nhulunbuy PO Box 1021 NHULUNBUY NT 0881
Mr Peter Tait	PO Box 3903 ALICE SPRINGS NT 8071
Ms Karen Thompson	Acting Principal Tennant Creek Primary School PO Box 506 TENNANT CREEK NT 0861
Department of Education	GPO Box 4821 DARWIN NT 0801
Ms Joyce Turnbull	Acting Chief Executive Officer NTETA GPO Box 2925 DARWIN NT 0801
Mr W. Turner	Manunda Terrace Primary Manunda Terrace SANDERSON NT 0812

Ms Linda Weatherhead	Director of Law, Policy and Conciliation Anti-Discrimination Commission
Mr Leon White	Principal Yirrkala Homeland Schools PO Box 896 NHULUNBUY NT 0881
Mr Gavin Wrigley	Principal Don Dale Education Unit PO Box 1407 DARWIN NT 0801
Mr Nolan Woolley	C/- PO Box 1945 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0870
Department of Employment, Training and Youth Affairs	GPO Box 3071 DARWIN NT 0801
Ms Cherylene Young	IESIP Writer Katherine School of the Air PO Box 531 KATHERINE NT 0851
Ms Pam Young	Principal Nemarluk School PO Box 39729 DARWIN NT 0821

Appendix 3

Case study and consultation methodology used by the review

Case study and consultation methodology

A case study provides rich and detailed qualitative and quantitative information on representative types of the phenomenon in question, in this case, Indigenous education.

Total number communities	27
Total number schools	44 (representing approximately 25% of all schools).

Establishing permission

For those schools / communities nominated as case studies, the project team is to phone and write—plus advise the regional superintendents—seeking specific permission to visit. At the same time, the school will be given a brief questionnaire to fill in regarding its staffing base and current student demography. School permission to access their specific MAP data, preferably over a five-year period, will be established. Material provided by the schools will supplement data the project team is able to collate centrally.

Methods

In summary, the review is compiling community profiles which pulls together agency and school-based information on each case study school, and supplementing this with material the review gathers through direct consultations:

- community profile material
- group interviews
- one-on-one interviews
- documentation and analysis; feedback to school and community for verification.

Community profile material

Community profiles are being collated which pull together centralised and school-based holdings on the following issues:

- teaching and support staff distribution and type
- turnover statistics
- access to school facilities—distribution and type
- student demographics—potential versus actual cohorts
- attendance, participation and retention
- grade progression and exit qualifications
- educational outcomes—subject area; school, NT and interstate
- health status.

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Group interviews

In consultation with the school principal, case study interviews will be conducted with key stakeholder groups for each school / community and ideally will include the following groups—to be conducted separately

- non-Indigenous school staff
- Indigenous staff
- ASSPA groups and school council members
- students where this can be arranged
- support staff—tutors, homework centre coordinators
- community members and parents not represented by above, including children not accessing the school.

In each school, the review's preference is to conduct school-based group interviews during school hours; and interviews with other community members in the afternoon and evening. This approach should be modified to suit local requirements.

In town centres, a number of Indigenous organisations with a key interest in Indigenous education also exist and should be included in the above group-interview program, where time allows.

Public meetings will be held in each town centre where this can be arranged.

One-on-one interviews

To be held with the principal, headteacher or administration team, canvassing

- the administrator's perspective on what is required to get improvements in Indigenous educational outcomes and an interpretation of the issues for that school and community
- the thinking behind current program activities and decisions, including analysis and use of performance data to plan school programs
- assessment of level of system support for good practice and adequacy of resources
- any evaluation material or other evidence the school uses in program design and judgment of effectiveness.

Appendix 4

Consent form and questionnaire used by the review

Indigenous Education review
GPO Box 4821, Darwin NT 0801

Snapshot view of Indigenous education in Northern Territory schools

As you know, your school has been selected as a case study in the current Aboriginal Education review. Members of the review will be visiting your school in the near future to interview staff, students and other interested people.

This four-page questionnaire is designed to give the interviewers accurate and contemporary information about your school. This will help us build a clear picture of what schools have in place to deal with the demands of Indigenous education service delivery.

We ask that you track attendance and absenteeism over a one-week period to give us a 'snapshot' of what is happening in schools. We would be very grateful if you would nominate a set week in the near future to fill in this questionnaire, preferably a period which is as representative of a 'normal' or routine school week as possible.

When completed, please tear off this page and return the questionnaire using the fax cover sheet overleaf.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call Kate Senior (Data Analyst) on (08) 8999 5612 or Tess Lea (Project Manager) on (08) 8999 5650.

Many thanks for your assistance,

Kate Senior
April 1999

Week beginning ❑❑❑❑❑❑

1. Details of school

1(a) Name of school	
1(b) Location of school	

1(c) Type:

Preschool	❑
Primary with Preschool	❑
Primary no Preschool	❑
Junior Secondary	❑
Senior Secondary	❑
Community Education Centre	❑
Area School	❑
Secondary	❑
Other	❑ Please describe _____

_____

1(d) Affiliation:

Government	❑
Catholic	❑
Independent	❑

2. Enrolment

2(a) What is the total number of children enrolled at your school (from the last enrolment return)?	
2(b) What is the total number of Indigenous children enrolled at your school (if different from above)?	

3. Staff

3(a) How many people are employed at your school? _____

3(b) Of these, what is the total number of Indigenous staff? _____

3(c) Please show the designations for teaching and teaching support staff (NB - please use extra pages if space required):

Position	Level (eg ET7, T9)	Full time	Part time	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Qualifications	Overall years of teaching experience	Length of time in this school?
Principal / Head Teacher								
Assistant Principal								
Senior Teacher (ET2)								
Classroom Teacher								
Indigenous Assistant Teacher(s)								
Home Liaison Officer								
Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker								
Aboriginal Resource Officer								
Other (please describe overleaf if necessary)								

3(d) Other Staff (NB - please use extra pages if space required)

Position	Full-time	Part-time	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Other agency staff (Please list below: eg DETYA ATAS Tutors; Batchelor College and NTETA staff; school nurse, school-based constable)				
Council Employees (Please list below: eg cleaning staff, janitor, tuckshop employees)				

3(d) What are the lengths of time that your current staff have been at this school. Please indicate the numbers in each category.

Time spent at current school	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Under 6 months		
6 months - 1 year		
1-2 years		
2-3 years		
3-4 years		
4-5 years		
5-6 years		
6 years and over		

4. Attendance

	Pre-school age	Primary-age	Secondary age
4(a) For all children in your school, how many were absent during the nominated snapshot week? (please do not count an individual more than once)			
4(b) What was the total number of Indigenous children who were absent from school? (do not count an individual more than once)			

4(c) In the nominated week, how many Indigenous children attended school for:

Number of Days	Number of Children
5 days	
4 days	
3 days	
2 days	
1 day	

4(d) In the nominated week, how many non-Indigenous children attended school for:

Number of Days	Number of Children
5 days	
4 days	
3 days	
2 days	
1 day	

Appendix 5

Selected reports and inquiries into Indigenous education accessed by the review

1994a. *National review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (M.Yunupingu, Chair) - Discussion paper.* Australian Government Publishing Service.

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Appendix 6

Indigenous education expenditure estimates

Methodology

- Breakdown of Total NT Department of Education 98/99 expenditure by ledger subprogram.
- Apportion expenditure in each subprogram by associated percentage of Indigenous student enrolments respectively. For example, under the urban preschool and primary school program, each subprogram— schools—are apportioned by their respective percentage of Indigenous enrolment.
- Subprograms where associated percentage enrolments are not available, apportionment are obtained from sections that are responsible for or working closely with those programs. For example, students with disability program apportionment were obtained from student services.
- Indigenous portion of the General Recurrent Grant was estimated using the DETYA per capita formula.

Caveat

Please note that while the total expenditures stated in this report are the actual expenditure recorded in the ledger, the expenditures for Indigenous students are derived using the methodology stated above and therefore will not stand any audit. In other words, the expenditures for Indigenous students included in this report should only be used for internal planning purposes and should not be quoted in national reports unless the method by which these estimates are derived is clearly specified.

Results

	Total	Indigenous	
NT-funded program expenditure	287.8m	114.3m	(39.7%)
Less General Recurrent Grant	13.6m	5.2m	
NT expenditure	**274.2m**	**109.1m**	**(39.8%)**
C/W-funded program expenditure	42.3m	23.0m	(54.4%)
General Recurrent Grant	13.6m	5.2m	
C/W expenditure	**55.9m**	**28.2m**	**(50.4%)**

Appendix 7

NT strategic results projects

NT: Approved non-government non-capital and capital SRP submissions 1998

Provider	Project Description	$ Cost
AIS NT/Menzies School of Health , Darwin	Advancing Indigenous literacy through intervention for hearing services	343 813
Batchelor College, Batchelor	Strategies to increase participation and attendance in mixed mode delivery of broadcasting course on remote communities	77 800
Institute for Aboriginal Development, Alice Spring	Develop and deliver vernacular & English literacy program for employment	122 000
Institute for Aboriginal Development	Delivery tertiary preparation program for Year 10 & 11 'dropouts' in Alice Springs	258 000
Kormilda College, Darwin	Lease computer notebooks to provide access to info tech and explore alternative delivery modes	13 960
Kormilda College	Establishing an intervention program for secondary aged illiterate ESL learners	110 000
Kormilda College	Computers & hearing/sound/field systems	91 480
NT Christian Schools Assoc, Darwin	Develop and trial Indigenous language program which recognises Indigenous learning styles and cultural knowledge	80 000
NT Christian Schools Assoc	Construction, computer, bus	363 715
Nyangatjatjara College, Ayers Rock	Construct/refurbish school and teacher housing	1 663 068
Yipirinya School, Alice Spring	Purchase/upgrade vehicles and general construction	485 957
Yirara College, Alice Springs	Construction, 35 seater bus & 4x4 drive	207 000
Yirara College	Range of curriculum and administrative initiatives to improve grade progression	278 400
Yirara College	Extensions/refurbish classrooms, computers & musical instruments; construct pool/recreation area	606 495
	NT non-government total	**4 701 688**

NT: Approved government non-capital and capital SRP submissions 1998

Name of Organisation	Summary	$ Cost
NT Education & NT Library Services	Literacy through libraries in non-urban schools	80 000
NT Education	Improved literacy through improved retention in Alice Springs	116 621
	NT Government total	**196 621**

Appendix 8

Bilingual programs: school and Indigenous Australian languages used

School name	Type of school	Languages used	Commenced
Darwin			
1. Maningrida CEC	Government	Burarra	1986
		Ndjebbana	1981
2. Murrupurtiyanuwu, Nguiu	Catholic	Tiwi	1974
3. OLSH Wadeye	Catholic	Murrinh-Patha	1976
4. Warruwi	Government	Maung	1973
East Arnhem			
5. Galiwinku CEC	Government	Djambarrpuyngu & dialects	1974
6. Milingimbi CEC	Government	Gupapuyngu & dialects	1973
7. Yirrkala CEC	Government	Dhuwaya & dialects	1974
8. Numbulwar CEC	Government	Nunggubuyu	1994
Katherine			
9. Barunga	Government	Kriol & Traditional Languages	1976
10. Lajamanu CEC	Government	Warlpiri	1982
Alice Springs			
11. Yuendumu CEC	Government	Warlpiri	1974
12. Nyirrpi	Government	Warlpiri	1986
13. Willowra CEC	Government	Warlpiri	1877
14. Areyonga	Government	Pitjantjatjara	1973
15. Docker River	Government	Pitjantjatjara	1980
16. Yipirinya	Independent	Western Arrernte	1983
		Central Arrernte	1983
		Luritja Warlpiri	1983
17. Ltyentye Apurte CEC	Catholic	Eastern Arrernte	1989
18. Papunya	Government	Papunya Luritja	1979
19. Watiyawanu	Government	Papunya Luritja	1981
20. Walungurru	Government	Pintupi/Luritja	1983

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